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HISTORY OF ENGLAND

IN

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER XXII.

THERE are few things more remarkable in the political correspondence of the time than the almost complete absence of alarm with which the English ministers viewed the events that have been described in the last chapter. They appear to have wholly scouted the idea that serious danger from France was approaching England, and their chief apprehensions were turned to another quarter. A deep and settled distrust of the Emperor Leopold was one of the strongest motives of their foreign policy, and they seem to have greatly misunderstood and undervalued his character, and exaggerated his designs. The alarm which the aggressive measures of his predecessor, against Holland, had produced in England, and the close alliance with Prussia which it was a main object of Pitt to maintain, had given a strong anti-Austrian bias to English statesmen, and it was confirmed by the long delay of the Emperor in concluding the peace of Sistova, and by some obscure and now forgotten disputes which had ended in the Emperor giving the Austrian Netherlands a constitution considerably less liberal than he had promised, and in the maritime powers withholding their guarantee. The diplomatic correspondence of 1791 is full of English complaints of the efforts of the Emperor to dissociate Prussia from England; of fears lest the Emperor should obtain by negotiation some permanent influence in the affairs of Holland; of expressions of an extreme distrust of his sincerity; of regrets that Prussia, in

allying herself with him, should have guaranteed the Austrian Netherlands without any frank concert or communication with England.[1] The English ill-feeling towards Austria was fully reciprocated at Vienna, and the Emperor, who was in truth the most unambitious and pacific of the great sovereigns of Europe, was looked upon by English statesmen as the most formidable danger to the peace of Europe.

From France, however, they seem to have feared nothing, and they looked forward with a wonderful confidence to a long continuance of peace. They were perfectly resolved to maintain a strict neutrality, and they had no doubt that they could do so. The relations of the two nations were very amicable, and even if it were otherwise, it was the prevailing belief which was continually expressed in Parliament,[2] that recent events had made France wholly powerless for aggression. The suspicions aroused in France by the negro insurrection of St. Domingo, were allayed by the conduct of Lord Effingham, and the approbation of that conduct was officially transmitted to Paris.[3] The Assembly, it is true, somewhat ungraciously refused to vote its thanks to the British Government, but it passed a vote of thanks to 'the British nation, and especially to Mr. Effingham, governor of Jamaica.'[4] But in general there was as yet no hostility to the British Government, and a very friendly feeling towards the British nation. In November 1791, however, a report was brought to England of a design which was believed to have been formed by the younger Rochambeau, to raise an insurrection in several towns in the Austrian Netherlands with the assistance of some Imperial troops who had been corrupted, and to support the rebels with some French troops of the line, while at the same time an attempt was to be made to excite a sedition in Holland in favour of the 'Patriots.' The report seemed to Grenville wild and improbable, but he thought it right to send it to Gower, whose reply was not altogether reassuring. From the character and opinions of Rochambeau he thought such a project not unlikely, but added, 'If such a scheme does really

[1] See Ewart to Grenville, Aug. 4; Grenville to Ewart, Aug. 26; Grenville to Eden, Dec. 16, 20, 1791; Grenville to Keith, March 26; Grenville to Eden, March 27, 1792.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xxix. 44, 170, 919, 929, 940.

[3] Grenville to Gower, Oct. 1791.

[4] Marsh's *Politics of Great Britain and France*, i. 48–50.

exist, it must be believed that this Government has not as yet given any countenance to it; but when one considers that the object of it, that part at least which regards Holland, is of great national importance, and is a point on which the honour of the nation has been offended—"haeret lateri lethalis arundo"—one should be less surprised than hurt to find if it should be suffered to ripen, that it should be adopted by this Government, especially when one reflects that a diversion of this sort abroad would tend to compose matters at home.'[1] A few weeks later, Clootz made one of his mad harangues at the bar of the Assembly in his capacity of ambassador of the human race, denouncing the despotic powers of Europe, and in the course of it he inveighed bitterly against the maritime ambition of England, and against the Anglo-Prussian Cabal which reigned in Holland. The Assembly received his discourse with great seriousness and admiration, and it was ordered to be printed.[2]

English statesmen, however, are certainly not inclined to attach undue importance to wild words. When the news of the peace of Sistova arrived in England, in August 1791, Grenville, who had recently assumed the direction of foreign affairs, believed that the last serious cloud had vanished from the horizon. 'I am repaid for my labour,' he wrote, 'by the maintenance of peace, which is all this country has to desire. We shall now, I hope, for a very long period indeed, enjoy this blessing, and cultivate a situation of prosperity unexampled in our history. The state of our commerce, our revenue, and above all of our public funds is such as to hold out ideas which, but a few years ago, would indeed have appeared visionary, and which there is now every hope of realising.'[3]

The same sanguine estimate of the situation continued through the winter, and was most decisively shown in the session of Parliament which opened on January 31, 1792. The King's Speech was delivered after the debate and decree of the French Assembly, which had made a continental war almost certain, but it did not even mention France. 'The friendly assurances,' the King said, 'which I receive from foreign powers,

[1] Grenville to Gower, Nov. 1791; Gower to Grenville, Nov. 18, 1791.

[2] *Annual Register*, 1792, p. 267.

[3] Buckingham, *Courts and Cabinets of Geo. III.*, ii. 196.

and the general state of Europe, appear to promise to my subjects the continuance of their present tranquillity;' and the chief recommendation of the speech was a diminution of the naval and military forces. With the enthusiastic approval of Fox,[1] this policy was carried out. The number of sailors and marines to be employed in 1792 was reduced to 16,000. The army in England was reduced to about the same number. The Hessian Subsidy had just expired, and Pitt announced that it would not be renewed, and the saving of 400,000*l.* which was thus made was divided between the reduction of taxation and the diminution of the debt. I have already referred to Pitt's triumphant Budget Speech on February 17, but one passage in it is peculiarly relevant to our present subject. Having explained how his Sinking Fund would accumulate for fifteen years, he added, 'I am not, indeed, presumptuous enough to suppose that when I name fifteen years I am not naming a period in which events may arise which human foresight cannot reach . . . but unquestionably there never was a time in the history of this country when from the situation of Europe we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace than we may at the present moment.'[2]

The Cassandra warnings of Burke were indeed still heard, but they had never been so completely disregarded.[3] Lord Auckland complained that even among very prominent English politicians the change of ministry which altered the foreign policy of Spain, and the death of the Emperor Leopold, hardly excited more attention than the death or removal of a Burgomaster at Amsterdam.[4]

At the same time a strong distrust of England may be already detected in French diplomatic correspondence, and especially in the letters of Hirsinger, the Chargé d'Affaires, who managed French affairs in London for a few weeks after the recall of Barthélemy in January 1792. Hirsinger acknowledged that Grenville had received him with great courtesy, and had given him the most explicit assurances of the friendly disposition of the British Government and of their fixed determination

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxix. 767.
[2] Ibid. 826.
[3] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. pp. 414, 415.
[4] *Auckland Correspondence*, ii. p. 398.

to abstain from all interference with the Revolution, but he was for some time sceptical and hostile, and his letters to Paris were filled with alarming rumours. He had heard that the Hanoverian troops were ready to march, and that the King as Elector of Hanover was about to join the coalition. He suspected that the English ministers were secretly stirring up the Emperor against France; that they were intriguing to alienate Spain; that they had designs upon the Isle of Bourbon and the Isle of France. He was told that it was only through the influence of Pitt that a proposal of the King and of the Chancellor to bring England into the coalition had been rejected. England, he said, watched with perfidious pleasure the embarrassments of France. Her flag was steadily displacing that of France in the commerce of the world, and in spite of all legislative prohibitions great quantities of French coin were brought to her for security. He soon, however, convinced himself that the dominant portion of the ministry was fully resolved upon neutrality. Pitt, he said, 'does not love us,' but he is too enlightened not to see the enormous advantages England derives from her present position, and nothing but a French invasion of the Netherlands could induce him to declare openly against us. The sentiments of the King were, no doubt, hostile to the Revolution. When Hirsinger was presented to him on January 20, George III. received him very cordially, but spoke with 'his usual frankness.' 'I pity your King and Queen,' he said, 'with all my heart, they are very unfortunate; your National Assembly is a collection of fools and madmen who are in a fair way to ruin their beautiful country by their stupidity and their folly. In truth Constantinople and London are now the only places where a French "employé" can live safely. I am very glad for you that you are here.' These last words, Hirsinger said, reminded him of Grenville's assurances of neutrality. On the whole he was of opinion that the English Government had no further plan than to extend English commerce at the expense of France. The power of Pitt appeared to him almost absolute. Last session his majority was two to one, this session it was likely to be three to one.[1]

At the end of January, De Lessart, who was still French

[1] Hirsinger to the French Foreign Minister, Jan. 17, 20, 27, Feb. 3, March 9, 1792 (French Foreign Office).

Minister of Foreign Affairs, sent Talleyrand to England accompanied by Lauzun, Duke of Biron, for the purpose of sounding the dispositions of the English Government. As an act of the late Constituent Assembly had incapacitated its members from holding any office for the space of two years, Talleyrand was invested with no diplomatic character, but De Lessart gave him a letter of introduction to Lord Grenville recommending him as a very eminent Frenchman, peculiarly competent to discuss the relations between the two countries. The objects at which he was to aim were clearly defined. He was in the first place to endeavour to obtain an assurance of the neutrality of England in the event of a war between France and the Emperor, even though that war led to an invasion of the Austrian Netherlands. Such an invasion, De Lessart explained, was very probable, but it would be a mere matter of military defence, produced by the aggression of the Emperor and intended to draw away the war from France and especially from Paris. It ought, therefore, to excite no alarm in England, and it was certainly not a case to which the provisions of the Treaty of Utrecht applied. Talleyrand was also to endeavour to obtain a similar assurance of the neutrality of the King in his capacity of Elector of Hanover, in which capacity he could dispose of an army of 30,000 or 40,000 men, and he was to feel his way towards the possibility of an alliance between England and France with a mutual guarantee of their possessions. Towards the close of the mission he himself suggested another object which was accepted by the minister. He thought it possible that the English Government might be induced to guarantee a French loan of 3,000,000*l.* or 4,000,000*l.*, and in return for such financial assistance and for a reciprocal guarantee of territory, Talleyrand was authorised to offer the cession of Tobago. This island was of little consequence to France; its inhabitants were chiefly of English origin, and its loss had been a cause of some regret in England.

Talleyrand arrived in London on January 24. He found, somewhat to his annoyance, that the newspapers had already described him as having had an interview with Pitt, and his mission began with a very disagreeable incident. Biron was arrested for an old debt, thrown into prison, and detained for

nearly three weeks; and, as he had no diplomatic capacity, Grenville declined to interfere for his release. Talleyrand himself, however, was exceedingly satisfied with his reception. He described the ministers as full of courtesy, while leading members of the Opposition at once called on him with warm expressions of good-will. 'Believe me,' he wrote only three days after his arrival, 'a "rapprochement" with England is no chimera.'

He saw the King, Pitt, and especially Grenville. With the King the interview consisted of merely conventional civilities. Pitt dwelt significantly on the fact that Talleyrand had no official position, but added that he would be most happy to talk with him about the relations of England and France, and reminded him that many years before they had met at Rheims. His really important interviews were with Grenville, and he described them in detail to the French minister. He did not enter into the question of the loan or of the cession of Tobago, and, although he convinced himself that there was no doubt whatever that England would, in fact, be neutral in case of a war between France and the Emperor, he came, after some hesitation, to the conclusion that it was better not to demand a formal and categorical statement to that effect, but rather to aim at once at the higher object of a close and positive alliance. He endeavoured to convince Grenville that the prevailing notion that the Revolution was unfinished and precarious was erroneous; that with the acceptance of her new constitution France had definitely taken her place among the free nations of Europe, and that it was the earnest desire of all well-judging Frenchmen to be on intimate terms with England. He proposed, therefore, that each government should guarantee all the possessions of the other. The guarantee should be drawn up in the widest terms so as to include India and Ireland, the two great objects of English solicitude. Having explained his policy at much length he begged that he might receive no answer till the proposal had been deliberately considered by the ministers.

Grenville, he says, listened very attentively. If the proposal had been accepted it would have almost inevitably drawn England from her position of neutrality, would have made her, as an ally of France, a party to the impending contest, and would have wholly changed the course of European history.

Nearly a fortnight elapsed before Grenville sent for Talleyrand to give him the answer of the Cabinet, and, although Talleyrand did not obtain what he asked, he expressed himself to De Lessart extremely satisfied with the interview, which confirmed him in his conviction 'that the intentions of England are far from being disquieting, and that her *de facto* neutrality[1] is incontestable.' Grenville began by assuring him that the dispositions of the English Government towards France were perfectly friendly; that not only were they not among her enemies, but that they sincerely desired to see her free from her present embarrassments; that they were persuaded that a commercial people could only gain by the liberty of surrounding nations, and that it was entirely untrue that they had taken any part in fomenting the troubles of France. At the same time the King's council, after deliberate consideration, had decided that no answer should be given to the proposal of Talleyrand. This reply Talleyrand attributed to a division in the council, for he said it was known that Pitt, Grenville, and Dundas were tolerably favourable[2] to a 'rapprochement' with France, while Camden, Thurlow, and especially the King, were strongly opposed to it. 'I do not yet know,' he continued, 'when they will be for us, but I can guarantee you that they will do nothing against us even in the case about which you are anxious, of the Netherlands becoming the theatre of war.' 'England is sincerely anxious for peace, and fully aware that this is her interest.' In the course of the interview he said to Grenville that he had no doubt that sooner or later an Anglo-French alliance would be formed. Grenville answered that he hoped it would be so. Talleyrand added to the French minister that it was a great misfortune that France had no accredited ambassador in London. Hirsinger was barely competent for a subordinate post. The dispositions of Pitt and the other ministers were not what had been represented. In order to carry out the ideas of the French Government an intelligent minister, sufficiently young not to be self-opinionated, should be speedily sent to London; and he strongly recommended the young Marquis de Chauvelin, son of a favourite

[1] 'Neutralité de fait.' [2] 'Assez favorable.'

of Lewis XV., 'who has talent in a large measure,' as a fitting man for the post.[1]

Talleyrand returned to Paris on March 10, and expressed himself to everyone with whom he spoke as extremely satisfied with his reception and with the dispositions of England.[2] Grenville's account of the mission is not materially different from that of Talleyrand, but it accentuates rather more strongly the determination of the English Government to keep itself from any kind of engagement, especially with diplomatists who had no formal or official character.[3] It was possible, Grenville said, that some similar application might be made to Gower to ascertain how far England might be disposed to make a formal declaration of neutrality in the event of a war, or to interpose her good offices as mediator and arbitrator. Gower was directed to decline to enter on such subjects with anyone but the Minister of Foreign Affairs; he was to say nothing

[1] The mission of Talleyrand to England has been sometimes narrated with a good deal of inaccuracy, but the whole collection of Talleyrand's own letters to De Lessart describing his proceedings (Jan. 27, 31; Feb. 3, 17, 27; March 2, 1792), as well as De Lessart's letter to Grenville (Jan. 12) introducing him, and his letter to Talleyrand, will be found in one of the supplemental volumes for 1791–1792 in the French Foreign Office, while Lord Grenville gave his own account of the mission to Gower, Feb. 10 and March 9, 1792. Morris was aware of the mission (*Works*, ii. p. 166), but he was not accurately informed about its circumstances or about the instructions of Talleyrand. I must take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to the officials at the Foreign Office in Paris for the kind assistance they have given me when examining these and other despatches.

[2] Gower to Grenville, March 10, 1792.

[3] 'Since I wrote to your Excellency on the subject of M. de Talleyrand, I have seen that gentleman twice on business of his mission to this country. The first time he explained to me very much at large the disposition of the French Government and of the nation to enter into the strictest connection with Great Britain, and proposed that this should be done by a treaty of mutual guarantee, or in such other manner as the Government of this country should prefer. Having stated this, he earnestly requested that he might not receive any answer at that time, but that he might see me again for that purpose. I told him that in compliance with his request I would see him again for the purpose he mentioned, though I thought it fair to apprise him that in all probability my answer would be confined to the absolute impossibility of my entering into any kind of discussion or negotiation on points of so delicate a nature with a person having no official authority to treat upon them. When I saw him again I repeated this to him, telling him that it was the only answer I could make . . . although I had no difficulty in saying to him individually, as I had to every Frenchman with whom I had conversed on the present state of France, that it was very far from being the disposition of the Government to endeavour to foment or prolong the disturbances there with a view to any profit to be derived from thence to this country.' Grenville to Gower, March 9, 1792. Sybel quotes (*Hist. de l'Europe pendant la Révolution*, i. pp. 361–363) some letters of Talleyrand to Narbonne also describing the mission.

to that minister which might appear to lead to them, and if asked officially and ministerially, he was to confine himself to general assurances of the friendly and pacific sentiments of England, and to a promise that he would transmit to England any request made by the French minister, provided it was put in writing.[1]

The diplomatic relations between the two countries continued for some time to be very amicable. An act of indiscretion on the part of some Custom House officers, who in January had searched the French Legation in London for contraband goods, shortly after Barthélemy had been recalled, was followed by prompt and ample expressions of regret from Grenville and Burges,[2] and some disputes which had arisen between French and English sailors on the coast of Malabar were settled in April with little difficulty. 'It is evident,' wrote Gower on this occasion, 'that the Ministry here have a most earnest desire to be upon the best possible terms with England, which is a sufficient reason for inclining the *côté droit* to be otherwise.'[3] At the time of the declaration of war against the Emperor, Chauvelin was sent over as a duly accredited minister plenipotentiary to England, and Talleyrand, though without any public capacity, was directed to accompany him, and also Du Roveray, a former Procureur-General of Geneva. Like Dumont, Clavière, and Marat, Du Roveray had taken part in the unsuccessful Revolution in that city in 1782.[4] He had afterwards lived in exile in England and Ireland, and was actually in enjoyment of a pension from the Irish Government.[5] The knowledge which Talleyrand and Du Roveray possessed

[1] Grenville to Gower, March 9, 1792.

[2] See a report of Nettement, who was in charge of the Legation at the time when the search took place, Jan. 10. Hirsinger to De Lessart, Jan. 13, 1792 (French F.O.)

[3] Gower to Grenville, April 11, 1792.

[4] Dumont says of him: 'Durovrai naturalisé en Irlande, ayant même une pension du gouvernement Irlandais, devait être considéré comme plus attaché au gouvernement de l'Angleterre par un intérêt permanent qu'à la France par une place passagère.'—*Souvenirs de Mirabeau*, ch. xxi.

[5] In a complete list of the pensions paid by Ireland which the Irish Parliament ordered to be printed in 1791, I find that Du Roveray had a pension of 300*l.* a year which had been granted him in 1785, and was held during pleasure. He appears to have taken a leading part in the negotiations for the establishment of a colony of Genevese refugees in Ireland which were carried on by the Irish Government in 1783. See Plowden's *Hist. Review*, vol. ii., part 1, p. 24; *Irish Commons Journals*, vol. xxviii., part 2, p. ccxix.

of England and of its leading men was likely to prove very useful, and Chauvelin was directed on all occasions to consult with them. Hirsinger was at the same time recalled.

The selection of Chauvelin was, as we have seen, a suggestion of Talleyrand, and the plan of his mission was formed upon the lines which Talleyrand had drawn. The instructions of Chauvelin stated that as the nature of the mission of Talleyrand had not permitted anything official to pass between him and the English Government, the friendly assurances which had been given him had no binding character, and that at a moment when a French invasion of the Netherlands, and perhaps of Germany, was very probable, it was highly expedient that France should obtain positive assurance that England would not in any way directly or indirectly favour her enemies. While asserting the full right of France to divert the war from her own frontiers into the Austrian Netherlands, Chauvelin was directed to disclaim on the part of France in the strongest and most explicit terms all projects of conquest or aggrandisement, and all wish to interfere with the internal concerns of other nations. In dissuading the English minister from taking any part hostile to France he was instructed to dilate upon the dangers of the excessive aggrandisement of the great German powers and of Russia; upon the almost certain destruction in the event of war[1] of the existing constitution of the German Empire, which would lead to a complete change in the disposition of power; upon the equally certain downfall of the House of Orange if it showed itself hostile to France; upon the danger of turning France from a friend into an enemy. He was also directed, in his private interviews with the minister, to dwell strongly on the important and delicate topic of the condition of Ireland. The difference of religion and the progress of enlightenment and public spirit had, in the opinion of the French minister, brought that country to such a state that nothing but a close union between France and England could prevent its separation from England, and the first cannon-shot fired in war between the two countries would make that separation inevitable. The decisive moment had now arrived when England, by consolida-

[1] The instructions were drawn up on April 19, the day before the French Assembly voted the war.

ting her union with France, might obtain a warm and lasting gratitude.

The instructions then proceeded to sketch the other objects at which Chauvelin was to aim. A defensive alliance between England and France, by which each power guaranteed the other all its possessions, would probably arrest the war at its outset, through the influence which England could exercise over Prussia and Holland. If Spain enters into the war it may be considered whether measures may not be taken by England, France, and perhaps the United States, which would give these powers the Spanish commerce. This was not to be ministerially proposed, but the suggestion was to be thrown out. In the last place the French Government was extremely anxious to raise a loan in England of not less than three or four millions sterling, with the approbation and, if possible, with the guarantee of the British Government. This object was so important that the King was ready to purchase it by the cession of Tobago.[1]

Some months still passed without any apparent change in the relations between the two countries. In the last despatch which Hirsinger wrote to his Government before leaving England, he mentioned that Pitt had just been assuring a commercial deputation that England would take no part in the war, and he added that the English minister, 'who neglects no means of obtaining popularity,' knows that the nation is solely occupied with commercial interests and does not wish for war.[2] The Government issued a proclamation again affirming the strict neutrality of England and warning all British subjects against any acts that might infringe it; and when a rumour was circulated that a press of seamen had been ordered, a paragraph, which Chauvelin stated to have been sent by Pitt himself, was inserted in the papers positively contradicting it and stating that 'there was not the smallest appearance that any event would endanger our present tranquillity, which we have so great an interest to preserve.'[3] Chauvelin had himself no doubt whatever of the pacific dispositions of the English Government, and his de-

[1] Instructions for M. Chauvelin, Talleyrand and Du Roveray, April 19, 1782. 'Réflexions pour les négotiations d'Angleterre en cas de guerre, March 30, 1792' (French Foreign Office).

[2] April 28, 1792. Chauvelin had arrived in London the day before.

[3] Chauvelin to Lebrun, May 1, 1792.

spatches—which were now confessedly drawn up with the assistance of his two colleagues, and in which the hand of Talleyrand may, I think, be clearly traced—at this time show none of the violence, hostility, and levity they afterwards displayed.

We may find in them a singularly able analysis of English politics. Those deceive themselves strangely, he wrote, who suppose that England is on the verge of revolution, that it is possible to separate the English people from their Government, and that the division between Ministry and Opposition is a division between the supporters of privilege and authority, and the supporters of the people. The kind of political discussion which makes so much noise in France, is in England a matter of general indifference. Attached to their constitution by old prejudice and habits, by constantly comparing their lot with that of other nations, and by the prosperity they enjoy, the English people have no belief that a revolution would improve their condition. Agriculture, arts, manufactures, commerce, the rise and fall of the funds are their chief interests; parliamentary debates come in the second line. An Opposition is regarded as almost as essential an ingredient of Parliament as a Ministry, but the question of liberty is not supposed to be at stake. The existing Ministry is not all with the King. Thurlow and Hawkesbury are, Pitt, Grenville, and Dundas are not; and the ascendency of Pitt is indisputable. The Opposition is very feeble, it is rather anti-ministerial than popular, and it has been fatally weakened by raising the question of parliamentary reform. Paine is utterly unpopular. The great landlords who were the chief supporters of the Opposition now lean towards the Court. The mass of the people are profoundly inert, and it is only by gaining and convincing the minister, that the ends of France can be attained. The prevailing sentiment in England was on the whole favourable to the Revolution. Men praised its results though they sometimes blamed its means, but there are influences abroad which are acting very prejudicially on English opinion. The unfortunate spirit of propagandism which is connected with the Revolution; the growing suspicion that French agents are fomenting disorder and endeavouring to produce insurrections; the constant attacks of the French papers on the English minister, and their habit of representing every sign of

disorder in England or Ireland as a triumph of liberty, have the worst effect; and the manifestly increasing violence of the Revolution, and especially the attack on the Tuileries on June 20, are alienating English opinion in both parties and persuading even the most favourable judges that a general disorganisation is taking place. The King would be quite ready to join the Coalition, but his ministers will never suffer it; they would gladly see the Coalition dissolved, and Pitt especially is inflexibly opposed to connecting himself with it. The King does not like Pitt, but he detests Fox; and the chiefs of the Opposition are so hostile to Pitt, that Chauvelin believed that they would be ready to go far towards the ideas of the King if they could by such means obtain office. On the whole, Chauvelin concluded that there was no fear that the Prussian alliance would draw England into the Coalition, or that the English would regard an invasion of the Austrian Netherlands as an occasion for war, and there were grounds for hoping that English influence might be employed in dissolving the Coalition, or at least preventing a dismemberment of France. French ministers, however, must act with much moderation and circumspection, and abstain from exciting disturbances in other countries. The proposed Batavian legion of Dutch patriots was a very dangerous measure, for it would certainly be regarded in England as a measure directed against Holland and her constitution, which England was bound by treaty to support.[1]

These despatches seem to me full of wisdom and moderation, but there is evidence that the conduct of the French Embassy was now not altogether in accordance with them, and faults, which were by no means all on one side, were gradually producing a serious tension. Dumont, who accompanied the embassy, noticed the extreme coldness they met with from the Court and from the society which it could influence, and the frequent attacks on them in the ministerial newspapers.[2] An apostate bishop, who had taken a leading part in the spoliation of his church, and a recreant nobleman who was conspicuous for his hostility to his own order, could hardly find favour with a society already scandalised and alarmed by the excesses of the

[1] Chauvelin to the French Foreign Minister, May 23, 28; June 5, 18; July 3, 5, 10, 14, 1792.

[2] *Souvenirs de Mirabeau*, ch. xxi.

Revolution. When the Duke of Orleans came to England he was treated with general coldness, and when Chauvelin and Talleyrand appeared at Ranelagh it was noticed that men drew aside to avoid them. Dumont acknowledged that they had made a mistake in the alacrity with which they welcomed the advances of the Opposition, and in the eagerness with which they sought the company of Sheridan and Fox, and they soon lived almost exclusively with the members of the Opposition.[1] 'M. Chauvelin,' wrote the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs in May, 'continues a stranger to his diplomatic brethren and does not gain upon the public opinion. As for M. Talleyrand he is intimate with Paine, Horne Tooke, Lord Lansdowne, and a few of that stamp, and generally scouted by everyone else.'[2]

It was the prevailing belief in England that the contest would be short, and that the French army was totally incapable of encountering a regular and disciplined force. Lord Gower, it is true, informed his Government that he found it to be 'a very general notion, at least in the Assembly, that if France can preserve a neutrality with England she will be able to cope with all the rest of Europe united,' and he added that 'this notion is encouraged by a persuasion that the influence of the Jacobins and an inoculation of their principles will occasion an insurrection, which according to their language is "le plus saint des devoirs," in every country whose Government shall dare to oppose them.'[3] He mentioned also that great efforts were already making to induce the enemies' troops to desert, but it is evident that he had himself no faith in the possibility of meeting disciplined soldiers with an army as disorganised as that of France. 'The state of the French army on the frontiers,' he wrote, 'is such, that in no other time or country would it be possible to suppose that it could venture to oppose a regular well-disciplined army although far inferior in numbers, and it is believed that the impetuosity of the Ministry will be counteracted by the prudence of the generals. Both seem to place their greatest confidence in the desertion of the enemy's forces. Corruption of every sort and in every manner is employed without reserve,

[1] *Souvenirs de Mirabeau*, ch. xxi.
[2] *Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 410.
[3] Gower to Grenville, April 22, 1792.

and this mode of making war seems to be the boast of the Assembly as well as of the Ministry. The miserable state of the army exceeds all belief. . . . They embrace the offers of any foreign officer who is willing to serve, and in fact they are absolutely reduced to this measure from the great scarcity of French officers who remain.'[1]

The Session in England lasted till June 15, and during its course there appears to have been no apprehension of coming war. Public opinion was much more interested in those domestic questions which have been already noticed than in foreign politics, and personal and purely party combinations absorbed much of the attention of the more active politicians. It was at this time that the first and only serious opposition which Pitt encountered in his Cabinet was put an end to by the summary dismissal of Thurlow, and the Great Seal was placed for a few months in commission and then given to Lord Loughborough. Chauvelin, in informing his Government of the fall of Thurlow, observed that, by weakening the party of the King in the Cabinet, it was of great advantage to France. In the Whig party the line of division was perceptibly deepened by the formation of the Society of the Friends of the People for the advocacy of parliamentary reform on a democratic basis, which sharply separated Grey, Sheridan, Erskine, and some other advanced members of the party, from Whigs of the school of Fitzwilliam, Portland, and Rockingham. Fox did not belong to the new society and did not approve of it, but he supported the demand for reform, which Pitt as well as a large section of the Whig party considered at this time peculiarly inopportune. The multiplication of small democratic societies corresponding with France, the very wide circulation of some extremely seditious writings, and especially the appearance of the second part of Paine's 'Rights of Man,' which was published in the beginning of the year, induced the Government to issue a proclamation against such writings and societies. The proclamation produced long and interesting debates in both Houses, and it again divided the Opposition. The Prince of Wales spoke on this occasion on the side of the Government. The King's Speech at the close

[1] Gower to Grenville, April 27, June 1, 1792. See the very similar judgment of Morris (*Works*, ii. pp. 152, 153).

of the Session again expressed the confidence of the Government in the continuance of peace.

The tendencies, however, in English politics at this time were not altogether in the direction of division. There was a widely spread conviction among politicians that the differences between Pitt and Fox were mainly personal differences or differences of situation and not differences of principle, that a united Government might be formed which would contain no greater divergence of opinion than had existed in the Government of Rockingham, or than existed now in the Whig Opposition, and that a strong and united Government would be of great national advantage. In the summer of 1792 negotiations were actively pursued for the purpose of effecting a coalition. As they proved abortive it is not necessary to describe them in detail.[1] It is sufficient to say that Leeds, Portland, Malmesbury, Dundas, and Loughborough took an active part in them, but it is plain that neither the King, Pitt, nor Fox really desired a Coalition. It was evident indeed that if a new combination of parties took place it was likely to result from the secession to the ministry of a large section of the followers of Fox. The prosperity of the country was attested from all sides; the Government was too strong both in Parliament and in the constituencies to need fresh support, and the Session had hardly closed when the news arrived of the triumphant termination of the long war in India with Tippoo Sahib. 'Thank God!' wrote the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 'we have once more shut the temple of Janus. May it be long before we open it again! For my own part, I do not see any object immediately likely to give us any occasion. . . . Hitherto the star of Pitt has been so prevalent that I depend upon it like an Arabian astrologer.'[2]

The contrast between the position of England and France was at this time extreme. The French had lost no time after the declaration of war in throwing their troops over the frontier of the Austrian Netherlands, but they were beaten back at once, decisively and ignominiously. An expedition sent from Lille

[1] Accounts of these negotiations, differing somewhat in details, will be found in the *Malmesbury Correspondence*, in the *Diaries of the Duke of Leeds*, edited by Mr. Oscar Browning for the Camden Society, in the *Auckland Correspondence*, and in the *Correspondence of Burke*.

[2] *Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 413.

under General Dillon fled in the wildest panic at the first collision with the enemy, and the soldiers murdered their own general, whom they accused of having betrayed them. An expedition under General Biron, which was directed against Mons, fled in equal disorder to Valenciennes, abandoning their camp to the Austrians. Such events were well fitted to confirm the opinion which had been formed in all the Courts and armies of Europe, that the impending war would be little more than a contest between an army and a mob; scarcely more difficult or formidable than the expeditions which had lately restored the power of the House of Orange in Holland, and of the Emperor in Flanders. In Vienna, Keith wrote, it was the firm conviction of the Court that the war would be 'brought to a happy and glorious termination in this single campaign.'[1] In Berlin there were doubts about its profit and doubts about its effect on the discipline of the Prussian army, but there was no doubt about its complete and speedy military success. 'The operations of the campaign,' wrote Eden, 'are talked of by those in place as likely to be very trifling and of short duration, but the undertaking continues to be unpopular, and it is even said that it would be wiser to draw a cordon as in the time of plague to prevent the spirit of innovation from entering the country, than to send so many men out, to imbibe its pernicious principles.' 'Count Schulenburg spoke of the re-establishment of order in France as easy to be effected, and makes no doubt of being able to return hither before the winter;' but he thought it not improbable 'that the most violent of the democratic party will retire towards the Cevennes and the southern parts of France, and there endeavour to form a republic.' Catherine offered to send a Russian contingent to the French expedition, but she was told that 'the business would probably be terminated before these troops could reach the Rhine,' and that an equivalent in money would therefore be more acceptable.[2]

The predictions of those who calculated that the war would make the continuance of the monarchy of Lewis XVI. impossible proved much better founded, and the King's republican ministers were the first to plot against him. His most trusted

[1] Keith to Grenville, July 21, 1792.

[2] Eden to Grenville, May 5, 29, June 30, 1792.

counsellors were furiously denounced in the Chamber as the 'Austrian Committee.' His 'constitutional guard' of eighteen hundred men, which was guaranteed to him by the constitution, and which might be trusted to defend him, was disbanded by the Assembly. The language of the tribune became daily more violent. The press teemed with brutal insults against the Queen, who was now constantly designated as 'the Austrian panther.' The very gardens of the Tuileries were thronged with furious agitators. The Queen complained to Dumouriez that when she ventured to look out of a window in her palace a cannonier of the National Guard seized the opportunity of shouting to her, 'How gladly would I carry your head on the point of my bayonet!' and she could see in one part of the garden a man standing on a chair reading out horrible calumnies against the royal family, while in another an officer and an abbé were thrust into a pond with insults and blows. The dregs of the population of Paris were speedily armed with pikes, and everything was fast preparing for the final sacrifice.

The King made one serious effort to assert his authority. The Assembly decreed the formation of a camp at Paris of 20,000 volunteers. It was to be composed of volunteers drawn from all the departments, and there was little doubt that the choice would be made by the Jacobin Club, who were virtually the masters of France. According to the constitution, no increase of the military force could be made except on the proposition of the King, but this was proposed to the Assembly by the King's minister, avowedly and ostentatiously, without having even been submitted to the King.[1] It excited great division, even in the revolutionary camp, and the King boldly vetoed it, as well as a decree ordering the transportation of all nonjuring priests. Roland read to the King a long, insolent, and pedantic letter of remonstrance written by his wife, but Lewis for once was firm, and dismissed Roland, Servan, and Clavière, the three Girondin ministers. How helpless he was, however, was only too clearly shown on June 20, when his palace was besieged and captured by a great armed mob. After being compelled to assume the red cap of Liberty, and exposed for hours to humiliation and insult, his life was at last saved

[1] Bertrand de Moleville.

by the tardy interposition of some popular deputies, and by the impression which his own placid and good-humoured courage made upon the mob. It was obvious, however, to all, on what a slender thread not only his position but his life depended.

These events had their natural effect upon public opinion in England, and the French Embassy became more and more unpopular. When the Government, in the month of May, issued its proclamation against seditious writings, Chauvelin delivered an official note protesting against its terms, and desired Grenville to communicate it to the two Houses of Parliament before the proclamation was discussed. Such an interference of a foreign diplomatist with a measure of internal police was justly resented, and Grenville answered with much force that, as Secretary of State to his Majesty, he could receive no communication from a foreign minister but in order to lay it before the King, and that the deliberations of the two Houses of Parliament, as well as the communications the King should make to them relative to the affairs of his kingdom, were matters absolutely foreign to all diplomatic correspondence.[1] Chauvelin still further aggravated the situation by publishing his official correspondence.[2]

In addition to the proclamation which was issued in England, warning British subjects against all breach of neutrality, the King, in his capacity of Elector of Hanover, announced at the outbreak of the war his determination to take no part in it,[3] and when the Emperor and the King of Prussia endeavoured to induce Holland to join the Coalition, English influence was promptly and powerfully employed to counteract their endeavours.[4] The simple and steady policy of Pitt was to remain strictly neutral as long as Holland was unmolested; to give Holland the fullest assurance of English support if she were menaced or attacked, and at the same time to confirm the Dutch statesmen in their resolution of scrupulous neutrality. On June 18, when the invasion of France was immediately impending, Chauvelin presented to Lord Grenville a memorial

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxx. 242-245.
[2] *Auckland Papers*, ii. 423.
[3] Bourgoing, *Hist. Diplomatique de la Révolution*, i. deuxième partie, p. 136.
[4] *Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 149.

inveighing against the conduct of the invading sovereigns, and urging the English Government to employ their influence to break up the league and prevent the invasion. Grenville replied that the same sentiments that determined the King to abstain from all interference with the internal affairs of France, determined him also to respect the rights and independence of other sovereigns, and that he did not conceive that his counsels or good offices would be of any use unless they were lesired by all parties.[1]

On July 26, the Duke of Brunswick published at Coblentz that famous proclamation by which he hoped to intimidate, but only succeeded in exasperating France. He disclaimed on the part of the allies all views of conquest, and announced that the allied sovereigns were on the march to put an end to anarchy and to restore the French King to security and liberty. Until they arrived, he made the National Guard and the existing departmental and municipal authorities responsible with their lives and properties for all outrages that might take place. All towns and villages that submitted to the invaders were to be in perfect safety, but all that resisted them were threatened with the most rigorous treatment. The city of Paris and all its inhabitants, without distinction, were commanded to submit at once to the King, and to insure to the royal family the inviolability and respect which were due to sovereigns by the laws both of nature and of nations, 'their imperial and royal majesties making personally responsible for all events, on pain of losing their heads pursuant to military trials, without hope of pardon,' all the members of the National Assembly, the National Guard, and all the municipal authorities. It was added that if the palace of the Tuileries was forced or menaced, if the least outrage was offered to the King or to the royal family, if they were not immediately placed in safety and set at liberty, the allied sovereigns would give up the city of Paris to military execution. No declaration issued by the French King as long as he remained in the hands of the revolutionists would be reckoned as his free act, but he was invited to retire to a town near his frontiers, under strong and safe escort, which would be sent for that purpose, and there to take

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxx. 247–249.

measures for the restoration of order and of the regular administration of his kingdom.[1]

This unfortunate document was little more than a clumsy German attempt to carry out a policy which the King, and especially the Queen, had long advocated. Prisoners, powerless and in daily fear for their lives, they had little hope except in foreign assistance, and they had for some time maintained a correspondence which nothing but the excess of their danger could palliate, at a time when war with the Emperor had become almost certain. In March the Queen wrote to Mercy warning him that it had been determined in the council to pour one French army into Savoy and another into the bishopric of Liége.[2] In April, almost immediately after the declaration of war, she wrote urging, at length, her views of the policy the Emperor ought to pursue. He must dissociate, she said, as much as possible his cause from that of the emigrants. He must announce, but with great caution, his desire to rally all those of whatever opinions who supported the King, but he must take care not to speak too much of the King, to avoid any expressions that could wound the national pride, and to express his sincere anxiety for peace with France. The hopes of the French ministers, the Queen added, are placed on insurrections in neighbouring countries, desertions from the foreign armies, and the possibility of detaching Prussia from the Coalition.[3] In the beginning of July, shortly after the attack on the Tuileries, she wrote in a more poignant strain: 'Our position becomes daily more critical. . . . All is lost unless the factions are stopped by fear of approaching punishment. They wish at all costs a republic, and to attain it they have determined to assassinate the King. It is necessary that a manifesto should make the National Assembly and Paris responsible for his life and for the lives of his family.[4]

On the 14th of the same month a memorial was presented to the allied sovereigns at Coblentz on the part of the French King by Mallet du Pan, which was no doubt a main reason of the proclamation of the Duke of Brunswick. After an elaborate

[1] *Annual Register*, 1792, pp. 283–287.

[2] Arneth, *Marie Antoinette, Joseph II. and Leopold II.* pp. 259, 260.

[3] Ibid. pp. 263, 264.

[4] Ibid. p. 265.

examination of the disposition of parties in France, the memorial points to the extreme and pressing danger of the royal family. Nothing but one of those sudden, spontaneous, and unexpected revulsions of feeling to which crowds are liable saved them on June 20. Their position is such that any day may be their last. Their assassination will be the signal for a general massacre. Civilised society in France hangs on a thread, and the anarchy may in a few weeks be worse than at San Domingo. The Jacobins are rapidly filling Paris with their satellites. If the courage of the King in this fatal moment is not seconded by the declaration of the European Powers and by the rapidity of their operations, nothing will remain for him but to fold his robe around his head and to submit to the decree of Providence. The only hope of safety is an immediate manifesto, supported by an overwhelming military force, declaring that the allies will not lay down their arms till the King is restored to liberty and to his legitimate authority. Terror is the only remedy by which the Jacobin tyranny can be overthrown. There must be an energetic declaration making the National Assembly and all the authorities personally responsible with their lives and goods for any injury done to the royal family or to any citizens. This declaration must especially apply to the town of Paris; but it must at the same time be said that the Coalition is in arms against a faction but not against the King or against the nation; that it is defending legitimate governments and nations against a ferocious anarchy which is threatening at once the peace of Europe and the whole structure of society. 'Their majesties count the minutes till the manifesto is published; their life is one frightful agony.'[1]

It is evident that this memorial was the germ of the proclamation of the Duke of Brunswick, though the latter document was unskilfully drawn, and more exclusively menacing and offensive than the King desired. The position of Lewis was now hopelessly false. He would gladly have prevented civil war and acted as a kind of mediator between the allied sovereigns and his people, but he was in fact corresponding secretly with the sovereign against whom he had been forced to declare war. He

[1] This memoir is given in full in Smyth's *Lectures on the French Revolution*, ii. 245–259.

looked to that sovereign for his deliverance, and his brothers were in the enemies' camp. He was at the same time betrayed by his own servants; a prisoner in his own palace, and living in daily fear of assassination. There was, it is true, a real though transient reaction in his favour after the outrage of June 20, and if the King had cordially accepted the assistance which Lafayette now offered him, or if Lafayette had shown more resolution, a new turn might have been given to affairs. But the Court had long looked with extreme distrust on Lafayette; they were committed to an alliance with the Emperor, and as on all former occasions they suffered the critical moment to pass. Lafayette returned to the army which he had left, and the ascendency and the terrorism of the Jacobins were confirmed. From Marseilles, which was now one of their fiercest centres, great numbers were brought to Paris, armed, and installed in the barracks. The troops of the line were all sent to the frontiers. The gendarmerie was chiefly placed in the hands of men who had deserted their flag to join the revolution in 1789. The Commune was organised with a terrible efficiency, and all power was fast passing into desperate hands. In the meantime a decree of the Assembly pronounced the country to be in danger. 300 millions more of *assignats* were issued. The dethronement of the King was openly and constantly discussed, and while the German armies were already known to be on their march, the King and Queen were almost daily denounced from the tribune as accomplices of the enemy and the chief obstacle to the defence of France.

The letters of Lord Gower graphically describe 'the awful suspense' that now hung over the French capital; the wild rumours that were readily believed; the growing terror as band after band of ferocious Jacobins arrived from the South; the fears of the foreign diplomatists, who believed their own lives to be in danger. One line in this correspondence which is not connected with French politics may not be without interest to my readers, for it records the close of a stormy life which has often been noticed in these volumes: 'Paul Jones died here on Wednesday last of a dropsy in the heart.' In the terrible and almost desperate situation of the King and of his family one last appeal was made to the English ambassador. 'In the

present extremely precarious state of the royal family, wrote Gower to Grenville, 'I have been desired to express to the Minister of Foreign Affairs the sentiments of his Majesty with regard to the proceedings of the National Assembly and Municipality and sections of Paris derogatory to, or attacking the safety of their Most Christian Majesties. I have declined to act in this business till I can receive instructions from your Lordship. The person of his Most Christian Majesty is certainly in imminent danger. On Thursday the Extraordinary Committee is to make its report upon the King's destitution. I wish therefore to receive your Lordship's instructions as soon as possible.'[1]

With this official letter Gower wrote privately to Grenville entreating an immediate answer as the case was very urgent. The answer was not long delayed, and it showed that the English ministers still carried their desire to be neutral in French affairs to the verge, if not beyond the verge, of inhumanity. 'I am strongly inclined to apprehend,' wrote Grenville, 'that no intimation of the nature alluded to by your Excellency could be of the smallest advantage in contributing to the safety of their Most Christian Majesties in the present crisis. Your Excellency is well acquainted with the system of strict neutrality which his Majesty has invariably observed during the whole course of the troubles which have distracted the kingdom of France. . . . If the King saw reason to believe that from an authorised and official declaration of his sentiments of friendship towards their Most Christian Majesties, and of concern for their personal honour and safety, their Most Christian Majesties would derive real assistance or protection in the present critical moment, his Majesty's feelings might probably lead him, for the sake of so interesting an object, to depart, in so far as is now proposed, from the line which he has hitherto pursued as the most consistent with his own dignity and with the interests of his subjects. But it seems too evident that any measure of this nature would only lead to committing the King's name in a business in which his Majesty has hitherto kept himself unengaged, without any reasonable ground for hoping that it would produce the effect desired from it. . . . It might give the appearance of the King's partaking in the views of the allied Powers, in which his

[1] Gower to Grenville, August 4, 1792.

Majesty has uniformly declined all participation.' While, therefore, Lord Gower was authorised to express, as he had always done, the King's friendship towards the French sovereigns, he was expressly forbidden to make any new official declaration.[1]

It is impossible, I think, for any candid person to follow the English policy and declarations up to this point without acknowledging the strictness and the consistency of the neutrality that was maintained. The ministers had been again and again appealed to from opposite sides, but neither the alliance of Prussia nor the personal danger of the French King, nor the imminent peril of the Austrian Netherlands, nor the Hanoverian interests of the King, nor his strong antipathy to the Revolution, nor any of the violent movements of public opinion which had arisen at home, had as yet induced them to depart one hair's breadth either in word or deed from the path of peace and neutrality. It is also perfectly certain that when Parliament closed in the summer of 1792 the English Government had no doubt whatever of their ability to preserve the neutrality which they had prescribed to themselves. We must now examine in some detail the causes which defeated their efforts.

The Coalition, which had once threatened to comprise all the chief powers of the Continent, had shrunk greatly in its dimensions when the period of action arrived. The Emperor and the King of Prussia only received in Germany the active support of the Electors of Treves and Mayence, and of the Landgrave of Hesse.[2] The Empress of Russia and the King of Sardinia also proclaimed their adhesion to the league, but the assistance of Russia was confined to a small subsidy in money, and that of Sardinia to a promise. Towards the end of July the whole allied army, consisting of about 100,000 men, and comprising several thousands of French emigrants, was slowly on its march for the French frontiers, and there was probably hardly a competent judge outside France who did not predict its speedy military success. Mercy, writing to the Queen on July 9, expressed his great fear lest the royal family should be carried by the republicans to the southern provinces; but if they could avoid this, he

[1] August 9, 1792. Grenville to Gower.

[2] Bourgoing, *Hist. Diplomatique*, i. deuxième partie, 136, 137.

predicted that in a month all would be safe.[1] 'All our speculations,' wrote Lord Grenville, 'are now turned towards France. I expect no resistance, or next to none, to the progress of the troops; but what can restore good government and good order in that country, and who is to do it, and under what forms, is covered *caliginosa nocte*.'[2] 'The comedy,' said the King of Prussia, 'will not last long. . . . The army of advocates will soon be annihilated; we shall be home before autumn.'[3] The opinions of Lord Gower have been already given, and Morris had long been describing to his Government in equally emphatic terms the utter disorganisation of the French army. 'If the enemy be tolerably successful,' he added, 'a person who shall visit this country two years hence will inquire with astonishment by what means a nation which in the year 1788 was devoted to its King, became in 1790 unanimous in throwing off authority, and in 1792 as unanimous in submitting to it.'[4]

It was not till August 19 that the German army crossed the French frontier, but before that date the inefficiency of the Proclamation of Brunswick had been terribly displayed. The Jacobin insurrection for the purpose of dethroning the King, which had been for some weeks prepared almost without concealment, and had been more than once postponed, was at last accomplished on August 10. With the details of that memorable and terrible day we have no concern. The treachery of Pétion, the Mayor of Paris; the murder of Mandat, the brave and honourable commander of the National Guard; the invasion of the Tuileries; the treachery of the artillery; the treachery of the great body of the National Guard; the flight of the King and royal family to the National Assembly; the massacre of the heroic Swiss Guard who alone threw some moral splendour over the hideous scene, have been often described, and the curtain soon fell on the oldest monarchy in Europe. By the decree of the Legislative Assembly the King was deprived of his functions and imprisoned with his family in the Temple. The civil list was suspended. A National Convention was summoned. The Girondin ministers who had lately been dismissed by the King,

[1] Arneth, p. 266.
[2] *Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 426.
[3] *Mémoires tirés des papiers d'un homme d'Etat.*
[4] *Works*, ii. 153.

were recalled, and with them were Monge and Lebrun, two furious Jacobins, who were appointed, the first to the Navy and the second to the Department of Foreign Affairs, and above all Danton, who became Minister of Justice. The Legislative Assembly voted the permanence of their sitting till the meeting of the National Convention. It was ordered that a camp should be established under the walls of Paris, to be formed of all citizens who chose to enlist. The artillery, who had shown their hostility to the monarchy, were authorised to plant their cannon on the heights of Montmartre. The administrative and municipal bodies received power to make domiciliary visits and seize powder and arms; and, the slight qualification which had hitherto restricted the suffrage being abolished, every citizen of twenty-one years of age maintaining himself by his own labour was admitted to vote in the Primary Assemblies for the new Convention.[1]

It is a remarkable illustration of the reign of terror which already existed in France that the memorable session of August 10, which destroyed the French monarchy, was only attended by 284 out of 745 deputies.[2] The first impression of Chauvelin himself, on learning what had occurred, was to write a memorandum to the English Government, which, however, he afterwards recalled, deploring and denouncing the acts of August 10 as a gross violation of the fundamental articles of the French Constitution, perpetrated by a small minority of deputies under the influence of intimidation, and the English Government now took the first of those steps which have been seriously contested. Lord Gower had been accredited to the King of France; when the monarchy was abolished his credentials became null, and the Home Government resolved to recall him.

Perhaps the best way of enabling the reader to judge this act will be by quoting in the first place the language in which the Government announced its intention to Lord Gower. Grenville happened to be absent from London when the news arrived, and the task therefore fell to the lot of Dundas. 'Under the present circumstances,' he wrote, 'as it appears that the exercise of the executive power has been withdrawn from his Most Christian Majesty, the credentials under which your Excellency has

[1] Bertrand de Moleville, August 1792. [2] Ibid.

hitherto acted can be no longer available, and his Majesty judges it proper on this account, as well as most conformable to the principles of neutrality which his Majesty has hitherto observed, that you should no longer remain in Paris. It is therefore his Majesty's pleasure that you should quit it and repair to England as soon as you conveniently can after procuring the necessary passports. In any conversation which you may have, you will take care to make your language conformable to the sentiments which are now conveyed to you, and you will particularly take every opportunity of expressing that while his Majesty intends strictly to adhere to the principles of neutrality in respect to the settlement of the internal government of France, he at the same time considers it no deviation from those principles to manifest by all the means in his power his solicitude for the personal situation of their Most Christian Majesties and their royal family, and he earnestly and anxiously hopes that they will at least be secure from any acts of violence, which could not fail to produce one universal sentiment of indignation through every country of Europe.' [1]

A circular was immediately after issued to the ambassadors of the different Powers, announcing the step which the English Government had taken. 'It is not his Majesty's intention,' it said, 'in taking this step, to depart from the line which his Majesty has hitherto observed of not interfering in the internal affairs of France, or in the settlement of the Government there; but it would neither have been consistent with the King's dignity nor with the strong interest which his Majesty invariably takes in what regards the personal situation of their Most Christian Majesties, that his ambassador should continue in Paris when the King to whom Lord Gower was accredited is no longer in the exercise of the executive government but in a state of declared and avowed captivity.' [2]

The recall of Lord Gower is the first incident of the French policy of the English Government which has been seriously blamed as inconsistent with neutrality. It has been said that Pitt ought to have taken the course which was adopted in 1848, when the English ambassador remained in Paris, and was accredited to the triumphant Republic. It is certain, however,

[1] Dundas to Gower, August 17, 1792. [2] August 21, 1792.

that as a matter of strict right the position of the Government was unassailable. The credentials of Lord Gower were to the King as the head of the French Executive, and when the King ceased to hold that position they became incontestably null. There is at least a presumption that a Government which is endeavouring to preserve neutrality in time of war, is most likely to succeed if it confines itself in all doubtful cases to the forms of a strict and undisputed legality. In recalling her ambassador, on the dethronement of the King, England merely acted in the same manner as all the other European Powers, and in my opinion she took the only course which was reasonably open to her. If, in the midst of a European war, she had broken away from the concert of Europe, if she had singled out for immediate recognition as a Government the men who had just overthrown the King, she would have acted in a way which was wholly unauthorised by precedent, which would have mortally offended the belligerent Powers, and which might, in the very probable event of a restoration, have involved her in a war with the monarchy of France. Such a course would indeed have been the most emphatic evidence of sympathy for the Revolution, for the Government established on August 10, if it could be called a Government, was at least wholly wanting in the elements of stability. Created by a mob-rising and by the unconstitutional vote of a small minority of the Chamber, it was threatened with speedy destruction by an invading army, and it was by its own acknowledgment purely transient or provisional. The Assembly had 'provisionally suspended' the King; it had appointed 'a provisional executive' in his place; it was itself little more than a slave of the Commune of Paris, and it only existed until the National Convention met.

Such a Government had no claim to formal recognition, and the condition of Paris was such that it was extremely doubtful whether an English ambassador could have remained there in safety. The power of the mob was at this time supreme. One diplomatist, the representative of the Republic of Venice, had already been arrested as he was leaving Paris and brought back by force,[1] and a mob outrage against the English Embassy might at any time have precipitated the conflict.

[1] Gower to Grenville, August 23, 1792.

And who were the men for whose sake England was thus expected to take a course which was at once so unprecedented and so perilous? They were men who, in the opinion of the great majority of the English people, were miscreants of the deepest dye, and whose hands were red with murder. The direction of affairs in France was now largely in the hands of men who had been condemned for criminal offences;[1] and although it might not have been in the power of the English Government to anticipate the hideous train of murders that stained Paris during the next few weeks, even before Lord Gower left Paris the general outline of what was to follow was disclosed. 'The municipality,' wrote the English secretary, 'has been entirely occupied since the 10th in collecting as much evidence and as many proofs as possible to inculpate the conduct of their Most Christian Majesties, and for this purpose every suspected house has been searched. . . . Many hundred people connected with the Court and the aristocracy have been thrown into prison, and two or three of the most obnoxious have been executed. It is generally thought that her Most Christian Majesty will be brought to her trial in the course of a few days, and your Lordship must not be surprised at hearing the most disagreeable accounts on her subject. . . . Hardly anyone will be bold enough not to find her guilty. . . . It is supposed that his Majesty will at least be confined for life.'[2]

Could the King of England with any decency have authorised his ambassador to countenance with his presence the probable trial and execution of the King and Queen of France? It may be argued that no possible crimes on the part of the governors of a country can dispense surrounding nations from fulfilling international obligations; but a constitutional minister is at least bound to consider the opinion of his own people before he takes a step which no obligation enforces on him, and which makes him in a measure the accomplice of acts his countrymen abhor.

These reasons appear to me to have amply justified the recall of Lord Gower, and there is no ground whatever for regarding it as an act of hostility. The ambassador was not, as is

[1] See Taine, *La Révolution*, tome ii. pp. 257–262.

[2] Lindsay (Secretary of Legation at Paris) to Grenville, Aug. 27, 1792.

usual when hostilities are intended, directed to leave Paris without taking leave. On the contrary, he had a perfectly amicable interview with Lebrun, and the English Government again formally, officially, and in the clearest language, proclaimed its neutrality and its fixed determination to abstain from all interference with the internal concerns of France. Nor did Lebrun treat the recall as a hostile measure. He regretted it, he said, as Gower had 'never been the organ of any words that were not friendly, or any sentiments that were not kindly;' but he was consoled by the strong assertion of the determination of England to remain neutral; he trusted that the British Cabinet would not, 'in this decisive moment, depart from the justice, the moderation, and the impartiality which it had displayed . . . and that nothing will alter the good intelligence which reigns between the two nations.'[1] Chauvelin, though no longer recognised as holding an official character, was still suffered to remain in England, and he wrote to his Government that there was nothing in the recall of Gower to affect the neutrality of England; that it was merely a matter of etiquette and usage and monarchical delicacy.[2] From Paris the English secretary, Lindsay, who still remained for a short time, was able to give similar assurances. He mentions the excellent impression which the renewed assertion of the strict neutrality of England had made on the mind of the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, and adds, 'The recall of the English mission from Paris in the present circumstances is considered rather as the necessary consequence of the above-mentioned system of neutrality, than as the forerunner of hostility.'[3]

In the meantime the allied armies were advancing into France, but with extreme slowness and hesitation. Morris, in his letters to his Government, justly spoke of their tardiness as a fatal political blunder, and he ascribed it to the fact that the Duke was a mere strategist who never understood the moral and political conditions of the war. The state of France was such,

[1] See the note of Lebrun, inclosed by Gower to Grenville, Aug. 23, 1792; Marsh's *Hist of Politics*, i. 161, 162.

[2] This question is very fully argued in Marsh's *Hist. of Politics*, chap. ix., and in Mr. O. Browning's article on 'England and France in 1793,' *Fortnightly Review*, February 1883.

[3] Lindsay to Grenville, August 27, 1792.

Morris said, that if a foreign army advanced rapidly it would certainly be gladly joined by multitudes, even from the armies opposed to it. If, however, there is much delay, numbers who are now silent from fear, will habituate themselves to speak favourably of the present Government in order to lull suspicion; they will commit themselves to its cause and be unable or unwilling to recede. 'If by this means the new Republic takes a little root, foreign Powers will, I believe, find it a difficult matter to shake it to the ground, for the French nation is an immense mass which it is not easy either to move or to oppose.' He still believed that it was utterly impossible that 'the French army, if army it can be called where there is no discipline,' could defeat the allies; but if Brunswick would venture nothing, it might be very possible for the French to wear away the time till winter put an end to operations.[1] In Paris the interest in the Revolution was so absorbing that it left little room for any other thought. It is a curious but well-attested fact that even the manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick, threatening Paris with military execution and all the members of the National Assembly with death, excited only a very feeble interest, and public opinion seemed to contemplate the event with a strange indifference.[2] 'It is thought,' writes Lindsay, 'that if the Duke of Brunswick winters in France his army will be enervated and lose its discipline, and if he returns to the frontier he will be obliged to begin everything again in the opening of the second campaign. They say it is very possible he may penetrate to and conquer Paris; but in that case the Convention will remove to the South, where the enemy will find much difficulty in following them. I have reason to believe, my Lord, that these are the sentiments of the ablest people and of those who have at present the most influence.'[3]

Longwy, however, was captured by the Prussians on August 23, and Verdun on September 2, and the allied armies slowly and inefficiently began the siege of Thionville and pushed forward into the rocky and thickly wooded country of the Argonne, which formed the chief natural obstacle to the march on Paris.

[1] Morris's *Works*, ch. ii. p. 196.

[2] Gower to Grenville, Aug. 3, 1792. See too Moore's *Journal of a Residence in France from August to December 1792*, Aug. 19–21.

[3] Lindsay to Grenville, Aug. 27, 1792.

Lafayette, who had endeavoured to support the Constitution after August 10, had been compelled to fly from his own army at Sedan, and was now a prisoner in the hands of the Austrians; but Dumouriez, who replaced him, hastened to occupy and defend the five roads which lead through the Argonne. On September 13 and 14, however, the allies succeeded in obtaining possession of one of them, and Dumouriez was compelled to fall back on a new position at Ste. Menehould. A skilful and daring general would at this time almost certainly have annihilated the small and undisciplined French army, but Brunswick contented himself with merely harassing the retreat, and Dumouriez acknowledged that such a panic arose that 10,000 men fled before 1,500 Prussian hussars. The position of Ste. Menehould was a strong one. Two large bodies of French troops under the command of Beurnonville and Kellermann were daily expected, and recruits were streaming in from all sides, but nevertheless it seemed certain to almost all the best judges in Europe that a single easy victory would place Paris at the mercy of the invader.[1]

In that city scenes were enacting which can never pass from the memory of man. The small band of desperate miscreants, who had seized upon the municipal authority on August 10, had created one of the most terrible despotisms of which history has any record, and the moribund and discredited National Assembly, after some faint struggles, sank into little more than the register of its will. Robespierre, Marat, Danton, Collot-d'Herbois, and a few others, were its leading spirits, and the savage armed mob from Paris and its neighbourhood, as well as the fierce Jacobins from Marseilles and Brittany, were the agents of their designs. By plays in the theatres, by mob orators haranguing in the Palais Royal and in the garden of the Tuileries, by processions and banners in the streets, by incendiary placards written by Marat and his followers and posted on every wall, by incessant and menacing deputations to the Assembly, by paid agents who were screaming for blood from the galleries, and by the constant

[1] On Sept. 11, Eden wrote to Grenville that he had just seen a letter from one of the principal persons in the King of Prussia's suite written just after the surrender of Verdun. It predicted that the allies would be at Paris between the 20th and 25th inst., and that the King would probably return to Potsdam before the end of October.

circulation of the vilest calumnies, the popular fury was steadily sustained. The statues of the Kings of France were now overthrown. Every emblem of royalty was effaced. The churches were plundered. Their bells were melted down for cannon. The property of the emigrants was seized. Committees of 'surveillance' were appointed by the Commune in each of the forty-eight sections of Paris. Lists were drawn up of all suspected citizens; and, while the barriers were closed, the river guarded, and passports refused, the Commune undertook domiciliary visits and the arrest of all suspected persons. The prisons were soon thronged; not with ordinary criminals, but with men who had lately been among the most respected in France, with nonjuring priests, with old courtiers and Government functionaries, with members of the once privileged orders. On August 18 the Assembly, intimidated by the threat of an immediate insurrection, had reluctantly obeyed the order of the Commune for the creation of an elective revolutionary tribunal, with powers of life and death, for the trial of suspected royalists; but, though executions took place, the guillotine moved too slowly for Robespierre and Danton, and the acquittal of Montmorin made them fear that a reaction might be impending. Marat was already preaching a general massacre, and Danton deliberately determined at once to give the opening war a desperate character by taking away every hope of pardon, to extirpate every possible element of counter-revolution within his reach, and to strike terror into all who resisted the domination of the Commune.

It is not necessary to describe the hideous scenes of massacre that followed. They began on September 2, when twenty-four nonjuring priests, who had been temporarily confined in the Town Hall, were removed to the Abbey. They were, one by one, dragged out of the carriages which conveyed them, and, with three exceptions, they were all murdered. One hundred and fifty or two hundred priests who had been confined in the Carmelite Church were next slaughtered. During six days and five nights the emissaries of the Commune, wearing the Municipal scarfs, proceeded through the prisons of Paris, calling out the royalist prisoners one by one, and after a few rapid questions asked and answered, sending them to be murdered in the prison courts. Some few were released against whom no charge was

even alleged. A few others escaped in the confusion of the night, by strange accidents, by the courageous intervention of powerful friends, or even by those sudden movements of compassion that are occasionally witnessed in the most ferocious crowd, but such escapes were very rare. Of the number of the victims it is difficult to speak with confidence. Lindsay, who left Paris in the midst of the carnage, estimated the number massacred on the night of September 3 at 4,000,[1] and some of the best French historians have calculated the total number of victims at 5,000, 6,000, or even 8,000. It is probable, however, that in this, as in most similar cases, there has been some exaggeration, and the most careful modern investigations have placed the number of the murdered at somewhat more than 1,300.[2] Among them were the Archbishop of Arles, the Bishops of Beauvais and Saintes, Montmorin, who had lately directed with singular ability the foreign policy of France, his brother, who had just been acquitted of all guilt even by the revolutionary tribunal, but who had been arbitrarily thrown back into prison, the minister D'Abancourt, Rulhières the late commander of the gendarmes, many magistrates and justices of the peace, old soldiers, old officers of Court, and scions of some of the noblest houses in France. There were octogenarians among the victims; there were more than forty boys who were not yet seventeen, and there were a few women. The most conspicuous of these was the Princess de Lamballe, who, as the intimate friend of the Queen, was especially obnoxious to the revolutionists. Her corpse was horribly mutilated and outraged, and her severed head was borne on a pike, first of all to the palace of the Duke of Orleans, and then to the Temple, where it was held up in triumph before the window, that it might be seen by the Queen.

All this was no explosion of blind fear or passion, but a massacre deliberately and carefully organised, and its main organiser was Danton, the Minister of Justice, one of the leading members of the Government which Pitt has been so much

[1] Lindsay to Grenville, Sept. 3, 1792.

[2] See Taine, *Hist. de la Révolution*, ii. 281–309. See too the admirably full investigation of the subject in *Mortimer Ternaux*, tome iii. Thiers says the number of the victims was estimated at from 6,000 to 12,000. According to Lamartine the estimates ranged from 2,000 or 3,000 to 10,000.

blamed for not having immediately recognised. On the second day of the massacre, the Committee of Public Safety issued a circular, signed by Danton, announcing the event, and inviting 'their brothers in the departments to follow the example of Paris.'[1] They were not slow to do so, and similar murders, though on a smaller scale, speedily took place in numerous towns in France.

It is hardly surprising that these events, and the almost certainly impending murder of the King, should have greatly modified the opinions and sympathies of Englishmen. Even Fox, though still passionately devoted to the Revolution, and very ready to justify the outrages of August 10, spoke, in his private letters, of the September murders as crimes incapable of extenuation, though he tried to persuade himself that the Jacobins whom he wished to see in power were not responsible for them.[2] On those who were less imbued with the new ideas, the ghastly scenes in Paris weighed with the horrors of a nightmare. 'All my ideas of happiness,' wrote Lord Auckland to a friend, 'are shaken by the calamitous history of France, every circumstance of which passes from day to day through my hands, and disturbs my mind both sleeping and waking. It is not an exaggeration to say that above 20,000 cold-blooded murders have been committed in that devoted country within the last eight months, and that above a million of orphan families have been reduced to beggary. . . . To this are to be added the proscriptions, emigrations, and banishments; the desolations still going forward under foreign invasion and civil fury; and the near prospect of a famine. . . . Our life is embittered by the details which we receive, and we can talk of nothing else. I wish I could tell you that the Duke of Brunswick is advancing rapidly to Paris.'[3] A letter of Grenville to his brother, written a few days after the news of the massacre arrived, shows decisively the real feelings and intentions of the English Minister for Foreign Affairs. 'The Duke of Brunswick's progress,' he writes, 'does not keep pace with the impatience of our wishes, but I doubt whether it is reasonable to

[1] Taine, ii. 283–288.

[2] Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 368, 369, 371, 374.

[3] Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, ii. 66, 67.

expect more. The detail of the late events at Paris is so horrible that I do not like to let my mind dwell upon them; and yet I fear that scene of shocking and savage barbarity is very far from its close. I deliver this day to the Imperial and Neapolitan ministers a note with the formal assurance that, in case of the murder of the King or Queen, the persons guilty of that crime shall not be allowed any asylum in the King's dominions. . . . I imagine everybody will think the thing itself right, and some people seem to hope it may prevent the commission of the crime in question. In this hope I am not very sanguine.' [1]

On the day on which Grenville wrote this letter, the battle of Valmy was fought, and a wholly new turn was given to the fortunes of the war. The extreme slowness and indecision of the manœuvres of Brunswick had clearly shown how exaggerated was the military reputation he had hitherto enjoyed, and how peculiarly unfitted he was for a revolutionary war. Swift and brilliant strokes were especially needed to act upon the overwrought popular imagination, to scatter armies that were still undisciplined, but which might soon become very formidable, and to overthrow a system of government which had not yet had time to consolidate itself. A slight change of personalities might have at this moment changed the whole course of events. But Brunswick was one of the last men to cope with the emergency. Slow, safe, cautious, and methodical; thoroughly acquainted with the technical rules of his profession, but with little originality or pliancy of intellect, and still less of that kind of courage which assumes lightly the responsibility of untried and dangerous enterprises; although he had been formed in the school of Frederick, he was a general of a type which Frederick had already done much to discredit, and everything conspired to bring his defects into relief. The allies had begun the campaign imagining that they would scarcely meet with any resistance, and the army, both in numbers and artillery, was much below the strength that Brunswick had deemed necessary. There was great jealousy between the Austrians and Prussians. The presence of the King of Prussia and of the French princes in the camp was a constant embarrassment to the Commander-in-Chief, and it soon became evident that the

[1] Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, ii. 217.

expectations which the emigrants had held out, of a general rising against the Revolution, and a general defection of the French troops, were wholly fallacious. Brunswick desired above all things to risk nothing, and he would have gladly confined the campaign to the siege and capture of a few strong places near the frontier. Having to protect communications, and occupy the places he had taken, his army was much scattered, and the French general who was opposed to him was greatly his superior in military enterprise and resource. For a short time after Dumouriez had suffered the pass through the Argonne to fall into the hands of the allies, the French army seemed in an almost hopeless condition of weakness and disorganisation, but the precious moments were suffered to pass. The French were now powerfully posted, and the arrival of two large bodies of troops under Beurnonville and Kellermann raised their number to sixty or seventy thousand. They were chiefly soldiers of the old army of the Monarchy, and although their discipline had been profoundly impaired, and most of their superior officers had gone over to the enemy, the military spirit was reviving under the lead of skilful generals.

On September 20 the allied armies advanced to attack them near Valmy. The affair consisted of little more than a cannonade and a reconnaissance. A considerable body of the French were driven back from a position which it was impossible to hold; the ground was occupied by the Prussians, and Brunswick then proceeded to advance against the powerful division of the French army, which was strongly posted, under the command of Kellermann, on a height behind the mill at Valmy. A thick autumn fog hung over the scene, but the sun suddenly pierced it and disclosed the formidable position of the troops of Kellermann. There was a long and vigorous cannonade from both sides, but the threatened general assault was never made. The unexpected strength of the French position, the steadiness with which the French troops had borne the Prussian cannonade, and the defiant shouts of 'Vive la Nation!' mingling with the inspiring strains of the 'Marseillaise,' which arose from their ranks, convinced Brunswick that the enterprise before him was more serious than he had supposed. He determined to desist till Austrian reinforcements arrived; he ordered his troops to retire,

and he failed in a subsequent attempt to cut off the French communications with Vitry.

There was no pursuit and no rout. No cannon were taken. The loss on each side appears to have been only about 200 men,[1] and the Prussians continued to occupy the ground from which the French had been dislodged. The affair can hardly be called a battle, and was certainly not a victory on either side. From a military point of view it was very insignificant, and there are hundreds of days in the history of France which were far more glorious for the French arms. But in spite of all this, the battle of Valmy occupies in the history of the French Revolution a position very similar to that of the equally insignificant battle of Bunker's Hill in the Revolution of America. The highly disciplined forces of the old monarchies had fallen back before the soldiers of the Revolution, and the result was a dejection on one side, and a confidence on the other, such as the greatest of victories in other times might hardly have produced. It was not without reason that Kellermann, after a long and splendid career of victory under Napoleon, selected Valmy as his title, and bequeathed his heart to its village church. Goethe, who was in the Prussian camp during the battle, as secretary to the Duke of Weimar, predicted that 'on that day a new era of history began.'

After the battle some negotiations took place between Dumouriez and the King of Prussia on the possibility of terminating the war. It was the special desire of the French general to separate the Prussians from the Austrians, and if a more conciliatory spirit had prevailed at Paris the attempt might not have been unsuccessful. The delay was, at all events, of great service to the French cause. France was now universally arming. The patriotic enthusiasm animated all classes against the invader, and multitudes sought relief in the battle-field from the horrors which were being perpetrated both in Paris and the provinces. A vast portion of that abnormal and volcanic energy which the Revolution had generated now threw itself into the contest. Every day brought crowds of fresh soldiers to the camp of Dumouriez. On the other hand, the season was now breaking. The rain fell in torrents. The roads were becoming

[1] This is the estimate of Sybel; Thiers says 800 or 900.

almost impassable with mud. The difficulties of providing the German armies with food in a hostile country had become very great. Their communications were in danger, and dysentery was raging fiercely in their camp. On the evening of September 30 they began their retreat. The blockade of Thionville was raised; Verdun and Longwy were retaken without a blow, and before the end of October the whole invading army of the Coalition had recrossed the Rhine.

There had seldom been a more complete, a more unexpected failure, and it occurred in one of those great crises of human affairs in which men are peculiarly susceptible to moral influences of encouragement or the reverse. A wild thrill of martial exultation and enthusiasm now swept through France, and a few weeks were sufficient to change the face of Europe. In the Convention which had now been assembled, all parties were in favour of a war which might lead to a universal Republic under the guidance and hegemony of France.[1] The war raged in the most various quarters, but everywhere to the advantage of the French. From Flanders the Duke Albert, availing himself of the removal of a great part of the French army to support Dumouriez, had endeavoured to effect a diversion by besieging and bombarding Lille, but the town resisted heroically and the Austrians were compelled ignominiously to retreat. The King of Sardinia, without taking an active part in the invasion of France, had openly identified himself with the Coalition. On September 10, France declared war against him. Before the end of the month one French army, under General Montesquieu, had invaded and conquered Savoy, while another, under General Anselme, had annexed nearly the whole of the country of Nice. The Piedmontese fled beyond the Alps, and the chief towns received the French with enthusiasm.

Still more striking and still more significant were the proceedings of Custine in Germany. If France had been governed by any of the ordinary rules or calculations of policy, she would have carefully shrunk from multiplying enemies at a time of such disorganisation and bankruptcy, and when a formidable coalition was in arms against her. The German Empire had hitherto remained neutral, and in the changed conditions of the

[1] Sybel, ii. 19-22.

war it was not likely to depart from this policy. A great part of it, however, and especially the part along the Rhine, was ruled by ecclesiastical princes, whose governments, mild and pacific, but full of abuses and wholly wanting in energy, were very incapable of defence. Custine, at the head of the army which had been placed for the protection of Alsace, marched into Germany on September 28 at the head of only 1,800 men. On the 30th he surprised and captured Spires, which contained vast war magazines collected for the army of the Coalition. On October 4 he entered Worms without resistance, alleging the assistance which that town had given to the emigrants. The wildest panic now spread through the Palatinate and along the whole border of the Rhine, and it extended through the whole German Empire when the news arrived that on October 21 the French had entered without resistance the great fortified city of Mayence, one of the chief bulwarks of Germany against France. It was believed that Coblentz would fall next, in spite of the great fortress of Ehrenbreitstein, and the Elector of Treves, who then lived there, hastily took flight; but Custine saw a richer and easier prey in the free town of Frankfort. That great commercial city had remained scrupulously neutral, but was now occupied without a blow, and it contributed largely to the expenses of the war.

The war had already a clearly defined character. It was self-supporting, for the French general everywhere raised enormous sums from the conquered territory. These sums, however, were chiefly obtained by vast confiscations of Church and Government property, and by crushing taxation imposed on the rich, while the French made every effort to flatter the poor. They came, their general said, to proclaim war to the palaces but peace to the cottages; to overthrow all tyrants; to give liberty to all peoples, and he invited the conquered towns to reorganise themselves as free democracies. The Rhenish towns were full of societies of Freemasons or Illuminati imbued with revolutionary doctrines, and prepared to receive the French as liberators. Between fear and sympathy all resistance seemed to have disappeared. Coblentz, at the end of September, sent a deputation to the French general, inviting him to take possession of the town, and imploring his indulgence. At Bonn and

Cologne the authorities prepared to take flight. The family of the Landgrave of Cassel had already done so. Wurtemburg and Baden loudly declared their neutrality.[1]

While the little army of Custine had thus established a complete ascendency in the richest part of Germany, the menace of invasion disquieted other countries. A dispute with the aristocratic government of Geneva had nearly produced a war, but it was for the present deferred by a treaty made by the General Montesquieu. The treaty, however, was not confirmed by the Convention, and the General was obliged to save his life by flight. On another side Genoa was already threatened, and preparations were made for the invasion of Italy. The French ambassador at Madrid haughtily remonstrated at the large Spanish force which had been collected in Catalonia, and Aranda not only withdrew it but also consented to pay an indemnity to France for the expense she had incurred in watching the Spanish frontier.[2] Both in Switzerland and Italy democratic societies were multiplying, and French agents were actively preparing the way for the invaders. Lord Malmesbury, who traversed a great part of Europe in the summer of 1792, declared that there was scarcely a State through which he passed from Naples to Ostend in which there were not emissaries employed by the French in propagating the doctrines of the Revolution.[3]

Dumouriez, meanwhile, was at Paris preparing the master object of his ambition—the conquest of the Belgic provinces. The folly of the dismantlement of the barrier fortresses by Joseph, and of the invasion of old local privileges by both Joseph and Leopold, was now clearly seen, and Dumouriez lost no opportunity of winning the Flemish democracy to his side. A large body of refugees from Belgium and from Liége accompanied his army, and as he entered the country he published a proclamation in French and Flemish assuring the inhabitants that the French came as brethren and deliverers; that they only asked them to establish the sovereignty of the people, and to abjure all despots; that, freed from Austrian tyranny, the Belgic provinces should now resume their sovereignty and elect their magistrates and their legislators; and that the French Republic did not intend in any way to infringe their

[1] Sybel, i. 582. [2] Ibid. ii. 23. [3] Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, ii. 52.

rights or prescribe their government.[1] Dumouriez achieved his task with a rapidity and completeness that filled Europe with astonishment and dismay. On November 6 the Austrians under Duke Albert were totally defeated in the great battle of Jemmapes. Next day the French entered Mons. On the 14th they entered Brussels in triumph, amid the acclamations of the people. Liége and Aix-la-Chapelle were successively evacuated by the Imperial troops; the citadel of Antwerp capitulated on November 28, and the citadel of Namur on December 2, and Luxemburg alone remained in the hands of the Emperor.

Nearly at the same time the Republic gave another signal illustration of the tremendous energy that inspired it, and of the reckless disregard for consequences with which it multiplied its enemies. From the correspondence that was seized at the Tuileries on August 10 it was discovered that the Neapolitan ambassador at Constantinople had used his influence, in conjunction with the ambassadors of Prussia and Austria, to prevent the Porte from receiving the French ambassador. It was wholly unnecessary to take any official cognisance of a matter thus discovered; but a large French fleet was lying unemployed. On December 16 it appeared in the Bay of Naples. A single grenadier was sent on shore to the palace of the King, where he demanded, on pain of instant bombardment, that the French minister should be recognised as representative of the French Republic, that the Neapolitan minister at Constantinople should be recalled and disavowed, and that a Neapolitan minister should be sent to Paris to renew this disavowal and to negotiate a commercial treaty with the French Republic. There was no possibility of resisting, and the King, who was a grandson of Lewis XIV. and brother-in-law of Marie Antoinette, was compelled to submit.

The aspect of affairs had changed with the suddenness of the transformation scene in a theatre. It was difficult to realise that only three months before, nearly all the statesmen and soldiers in Europe had agreed that the Revolution had reduced France to a long period of hopeless debility and insignificance, and had predicted that an army of 100,000 Austrians and

[1] Bourgoing, *Hist. Dipl. de la Révolution Française*, i. deuxième partie, 254, 255.

Prussians was amply sufficient to seize her capital and to overturn her Government. Yet within that time a country whose Government, finances, and armies seemed all in hopeless disorder, had annexed Savoy and Nice, penetrated to the heart of Germany, conquered the whole of Belgium, and intimidated Naples and Spain. Lewis XIV. in his greatest days had scarcely been so powerful or so arrogant, and, as Burke alone had predicted, the Revolution was everywhere finding its most powerful instruments in the democratic principles which it propagated, and in the numerous allies which those principles secured for it in every country which it invaded. The confidence of the Revolutionists was unbounded. 'We must break with all the Cabinets in Europe,' said Brissot. 'What are the boasted schemes of Alberoni or Richelieu compared with the great revolutions we are called upon to make? . . . *Novus rerum nascitur ordo.*'

It was impossible that neutral Powers should not look with alarm on the terrible phenomenon which was unfolding itself, and should not find a serious and menacing significance in correspondences with Paris that were established by societies within their borders. In order to form a just judgment of the conduct of the English Government in this great crisis, we must follow its proceedings very closely.

We may first examine the situation as it is disclosed in the secret correspondence of the French agents with their Government. Chauvelin, as we have seen, strongly urged, at the time of the recall of Lord Gower, that this should not be regarded as in any way a measure of hostility to France, and that it should not be followed by his own recall. To anyone, he wrote, who considers the conduct of England since the beginning of the Revolution, it will appear evident that she can have no real ill-will to France. Her constant refusal to accede to the Pillnitz Convention, the neutral attitude assumed by the King, as Elector of Hanover, in the German Diet when the German feudatory rights were first mentioned, and the neutrality which England openly declared at a time when the French troops were entering the Low Countries, abundantly shows it, and she will never accept the position of a secondary Power by placing herself at the service of a league which she cannot direct. England only asks

to be treated with respect and consideration,[1] and to be allowed to enjoy in peace the fruits of her industry and commerce. If the moment is not favourable for a close connection with her, if she takes great interest in the fate of the King, and is disquieted by fear of revolutionary propagandism, it is the interest of France to calm her. It should be the task of the French ministers to prevent a momentary suspension of official intercourse from degenerating into a rupture. He did not expect to be suffered to hold any official communication with the English Government till after the Convention had settled the new constitution of France; but he urged up to the end of September, that there was no doubt of the pacific intentions of England, and he mentioned that the Lords of the Admiralty, in their recent tour of inspection through the ports, had been actually reducing the number of seamen on active service. He complained that French agents in London were exciting much suspicion, and that many refractory priests who were sent to England would probably ultimately find their way to Ireland, where, as 'the lowest classes are as superstitiously attached to Catholicism as in the thirteenth century,' they might easily excite a general feeling against the Revolution. He repudiated with some scorn a new suggestion of Lebrun, that England might be induced to join France with a view to seizing the Spanish colonies. It was idle to suppose that she would abandon her pacific system which she had deliberately adopted, and the acquisition of Louisiana, which the French minister supposed might be an inducement, was perfectly indifferent to her since she had lost her chief American colonies. 'The most lively interest,' he said, 'is taken by all classes in the fate of the King and royal family, and even those most attached to us think that any act against their personal safety would be most fatal to the cause of liberty.' When Lebrun, at the end of September, announced to Chauvelin the abolition of royalty in France, Chauvelin answered that this was only what was expected, but that it would be most imprudent to require an immediate recognition from neutral Powers. Let France make herself a strong and united power; let her act with magnanimity and humanity towards her deposed King, and she will soon find the neutral

[1] 'Qu'on la respecte et qu'on la ménage.'

Powers quite ready to recognise the Republic, perhaps even before the Convention shall have fully settled the Constitution.[1]

These despatches show clearly the policy of Chauvelin to the beginning of October. They were not written in conjunction with Talleyrand, for Talleyrand had returned to Paris in the beginning of July, and although he came again to England in September for his own safety, he was then in disgrace with his Government, and appears to have had no further connection with Chauvelin, and little or no communication with English ministers.[2] But at Paris, a change in the attitude of the Government towards England was already perceptible. The French minister directed Chauvelin indeed to remain at his post, and to maintain a prudent and circumspect conduct, but he expressed his complete distrust of the amicable professions of England. In 1756 and in 1778, he said, she had carried out all the preparations for war without the knowledge of French ambassadors. The same thing might occur again, and the Provisional Executive Council, without withdrawing their confidence from Chauvelin, had already sent over several persons on special missions to England.[3]

Some of them may be traced in the correspondence. There was Scipio Mourges, who was sent over as second Secretary of Legation, to the great indignation of Chauvelin, who had never asked for a second secretary, who knew nothing of the

[1] Chauvelin to the French minister, Aug. 28, 31, Sept. 13, 22, 26, 29, 1792 (French Foreign Office).

[2] Talleyrand's return to Paris is generally ascribed to a disagreement with Chauvelin, but in a letter to Chambonas (who was for a short time Foreign Minister after Dumouriez) Chauvelin mentions that Talleyrand himself wished to go to Paris for a fortnight and that his presence there might be useful (Chauvelin to Chambonas, June 22, July 5, 1792). On returning to England in disgrace, Talleyrand wrote to Grenville (Sept. 18) stating that though he had no mission of any kind, he would be happy to give any information in his power about the state of France, but there is, I believe, no evidence that Grenville responded to his offer. (See Lord Dalling's *Hist. Characters*, i. 158–161.) Noel wrote to his Government in October (Oct. 26, F F.O.), 'J'apprends que l'Evêque d'Autun a des conférences très fréquentes avec Fox. Les gens qui tiennent au gouvernement m'affirment qu'il ne jouit ici d'aucune estime ni d'aucun crédit.' There is a memoir by Talleyrand, dated London, Nov. 25, 1792, in the F.F.O. on the relations of France with other countries. It contends that the only relations France should seek with England are those of industry and commerce. There should be a convention between the two countries for the enfranchisement of their respective colonies. The commercial prejudices of England, Talleyrand says, are no doubt opposed to Free Trade, but the fact of the constant increase of her commerce with America since its enfranchisement ought to be conclusive.

[3] Aug. 28, Sept. 6, 1792.

appointment till it was made, and who at first positively refused to receive him into his house. There was Noel—better known as the author of innumerable school books—who became a kind of supplemental ambassador with regular instructions, including the proposed loan and cession of Tobago, and who carried on a voluminous correspondence with the French minister. There was Maret, whose very important negotiations with Pitt will be presently related; and there were a number of obscure adventurers, whose business appears to have been to plot with the many seditious English societies that were now in correspondence with the Jacobins at Paris. One man, named Randon de Lucenay, writes that Fox had lodged with him on his last visit to Paris; that he had in consequence come in close contact with many Englishmen; that if the Government would approve of him he would be happy to go at his own expense (for he was, he said, a man of fortune) on a secret mission to England, to propagate 'the principles of Liberty and Equality.' His offer was accepted, and he soon wrote from London that he had seen some of the Opposition leaders;[1] that Pitt was the irreconcilable enemy of the Revolution, and that the French must assist the efforts of the party opposed to him. He thought that the subscription for the refugee priests had produced a discontent which it must be the business of the French agents to increase. He had been 'explaining' the September massacres, on which the enemies of the Revolution were fond of dwelling, and he trusted much to his high rank among the Freemasons to assist his mission. By means of the Freemasons, he wrote, the new principles may be best diffused, and he gravely assured Lebrun that he had, through their agency, so disposed the minds of men, that if the Republic engaged in a maritime war with Spain, she would be able to dispose of half the sailors of England. Another Frenchman, named Marc Antoine Jullien, wrote to Lebrun that since his arrival in London he had been carefully studying English opinion, and had no doubt that it was strongly in favour of the Revolution. From six to twelve more secret agents, however, should be at once sent over, who would be in correspondence with French patriots.[2]

[1] 'Lord fields, fox, Schéridam, milord Williams Gordon' (*sic*).

[2] All these letters are in the French Foreign Office.

In October a great change began to pass over the correspondence of Chauvelin. It was partly due to the brilliant and unexpected victories of the French, which had profoundly changed the situation, and had evidently exercised an intoxicating influence on his not very steady judgment, and partly also, I think, to influences of a more personal kind. As long as Chauvelin was unrecognised by the English Government, his position was little more important than that of the many other agents the French Executive Council were, to his great disgust, employing in England. It was evident, too, that more violent counsels were prevailing in Paris, and those who wished to maintain their position must keep abreast of the stream. In England, the successes of the Revolution had immensely increased the violent Republican and Democratic party who were overwhelming the French representatives with their sympathies; while the Government, and in general the upper classes of society, were manifestly alarmed, alienated by the deposition of the King, and horror-stricken by the September murders. Parties were becoming much more sharply divided, and the French envoy was naturally gravitating towards the leadership of a Republican party.

On October 22 Du Roveray had an interview with Grenville, urging him to accelerate the recognition of the Republic, and Chauvelin informed Lebrun that he would now make it his single object to obtain this recognition from the English Government. All the exterior relations of France, he wrote, had wholly changed since 'the satellites of tyranny' had been driven from the French soil, and he complained that he had no instructions except those which he had received from a 'perjured King,' and at a time when the situation of France was wholly different. 'France,' he said, 'like one who has just received a rich heritage,' must now address herself in turn to all her creditors, and in England the power with which she must treat is public opinion. The Government fully counted on the success of Prussia, and they are in consternation at her defeat. The King and the Prince of Wales are in the most violent alarm. The emigrants are in despair, and numbers wish to return to France. Some of the old friends of France in the upper classes are abandoning her. The Convention had directed Chauvelin to offer to some of them

the right of French citizenship, but not one of them, he complained, had yet answered. Mackintosh, who was among the number, had been heard to say that since August 10 and the September massacres he only wished to forget France. The policy and intentions of Fox were very equivocal. No one knew whether he was for peace or war, and after a long delay he had sent Chauvelin a message that it would be extremely embarrassing to him to be made a French citizen, especially if he shared the honour with Horne Tooke. But if the Republic was losing ground with the upper classes it was very different with the populace. The French successes, wrote Chauvelin, had an immediate and extraordinary effect on English opinion. 'No one now doubts the success of the Revolution. The people are tending to our principles, but those principles are combated by the enormous influence of the ministry and more dreaded by the rich merchants than even by the peers. The Patriotic Societies, however, throughout England are daily increasing in numbers, are voting addresses to the Convention, and are preparing a festival in honour of our triumphs. Grave troubles are gathering in Ireland. The Catholics are very discontented, and three regiments have been already sent over. In Scotland, also, there is much discontent. It is not impossible that the triumph of the Revolution in France may accelerate revolution in England. "The god Republic has opened the eyes of the people of Great Britain. They are now ripe for all truths."'

He acknowledged that many members of the Opposition were moving towards the Government, alarmed at the revolutionary propagandism and also at the French invasion of Brabant. This invasion, he says, is now causing the gravest disquietude in the ministry, and they will do all they can to baffle it by intrigue. Pitt is full of fears lest France, in spite of her declarations, or authorising herself by a popular vote, should incorporate Belgium in the French Republic, raise Holland against the House of Orange, and, extending her own power to the sea, reduce England to insignificance. England had borne placidly the first fruitless invasion of Brabant, but he believed that although Pitt detested Austria and never considered himself bound by treaty to guarantee the Austrian dominion in Flanders, he would draw the sword rather than acquiesce in a permanent

French Government at Brussels. The fear of seeing Brabant in our power and Holland menaced, he repeated, is now the strongest preoccupation of the Government.

What policy they would ultimately pursue he considered very doubtful, and his own judgment somewhat fluctuated. 'Men give the British Cabinet the credit of many intrigues and much activity in Europe. I believe that for a year past its sole policy has been apathy and the most perfect inaction.' The people are now so much in our favour that war would be very unpopular. Councils are continually held, but no decision has been arrived at. Pitt, he was informed, lately stood alone in opposing an armament which even Lord Grenville desired. The ministry is torn by divisions. There are rumours of the retirement of Pitt, and the King is very cold to him. Nothing, Chauvelin was convinced, but anxieties relating to Holland 'can decide the very timid British minister to the smallest hostile proceedings against us. Since the Republic has decided to respect Holland you may fully count upon the entire inaction of the British Government.'[1]

The last sentence was written in reply to Lebrun, who had authorised Chauvelin to assert that while France was going to free the Belgic Provinces from the Austrian rule, and was determined that they should never again be reunited to Austria, she had no intention of incorporating them in the French Republic or of attacking Holland. France had already disclaimed all views of conquest, and Belgium and Holland would both be perfectly free to follow their wishes. At the same time Lebrun informed Chauvelin that he had no belief either in an alliance or in a cordial friendship with England. He directed him to pay special attention to the agitation for reform and to the fermentation in Ireland, and he sent him the new 'Hymn to Liberty,' duly set to music, for the use of the Society of the Revolution in London.[2]

The despatches of Noel from London give an independent and a very similar picture of the state of affairs in England. Nothing, he said, can be more evident than the growth of

[1] Chauvelin to Lebrun, Oct. 22, 25, 26, 30, 31, Nov. 14, 21, 1792 (French Foreign Office).

[2] Lebrun to Chauvelin, Oct. 30, Nov. 6, 1792 (ibid.)

popular feeling in favour of the Revolution, and democratic clubs and societies are starting up on all sides. England appeared to him in exactly the same state as France in 1789. All the signs of a coming revolution are there. In Scotland and Ireland disquieting symptoms are multiplying fast. The Government is anxiously investigating the dispositions of the troops. The Tower of London is not safe from a popular outbreak like that which captured the Bastille. An insurrection is very probable, and France should prepare her fleets. The ministers are in the utmost embarrassment. Pitt, who 'cares only for popularity,' would be an ardent revolutionist if it were not for the party of the King, but he is in great perplexity; he is losing ground, and the party of the King is strengthening. The triumphs of Dumouriez in Belgium are producing the keenest anxiety in the ministry and among the diplomatists, and a corresponding exultation among the friends of France. Noel hears that Pitt has fully decided not to make war, and that Calonne denounces him as a democrat. But Pitt is extremely anxious about Holland, and says that if the French foment troubles there, England must interfere. The City shares this opinion and is full of alarm. The Opposition is divided between the aristocracy, which is much the stronger section, and the sympathisers with France. Fox is utterly undecided. His opinions lean one way; the money which he owes certain great people draws him in the other, and he gives himself up to sporting in order to avoid taking a decision. Sheridan is equally trammelled by his own debts. The storm is steadily gathering. Lord Lansdowne alone, who has always proclaimed himself a partisan of our Revolution, is taking his measures. His boundless ambition, his great talents, and his great fortune mark him out as destined to take a conspicuous part in directing it, and he knows that if he does not it will fall into the hands of Horne Tooke and men of that stamp. Noel is trying to enter into a negotiation with the ministry, but all parties agree that the essential preliminary of success is the recall of Chauvelin. He is a man of talent, and may be usefully employed elsewhere, but in England he is quite discredited.[1]

[1] Noel to Lebrun, Oct. 20, Nov. 22, 24, 1792. Noel's letters appear to have been opened in England. In Jan. 1793, Lord Shetfield wrote to

From these accounts of the situation derived from French sources we must now turn to those which were given by the English ministers themselves. They had been repeatedly sounded by foreign Powers as to their wishes and speculations relating to France, but they had hitherto uniformly refused to answer except in the vaguest terms. 'Our neutral conduct,' they said, 'gives us no claim to interfere either with advice or opinion,' and they had added a general hope that France might give up her old restless foreign policy and attain order and stability at home.[1] A full and perfectly confidential letter, however, of Grenville to his brother, written on November 7, remains, and it puts us in complete possession of the opinions, intentions, and spirit of the English Minister for Foreign Affairs. 'I bless God,' he writes, 'that we had the wit to keep ourselves out of the glorious enterprise of the combined armies, and that we were not tempted by the hope of sharing the spoils in the division of France, nor by the prospect of crushing all democratical principles all over the world at one blow.' The events of the last two months, he says, he can only explain by conjecture, for one of the results of the strict neutrality of England is that the allied Powers have left her in complete ignorance of their conduct and their intentions.[2] He proceeds, however, to enumerate with considerable sagacity the probable causes of the collapse of the last invasion of France; he predicts that next spring the Coalition will find themselves obliged to attempt another invasion under much more difficult circumstances, and he describes the probable action of the chief Powers. England, he emphatically says, will 'do nothing,' and Portugal and Holland will follow

Auckland: 'Noel, Maret's second, remains here still, or at least was here very lately. He wrote to France the end of November that insurrection would immediately break out in England. On his return from Dumouriez' army, he found everything much changed. He has written that there is nothing more to be done here; he dreads the suspension of the Habeas Corpus; he had, however, already placed his papers in safety.—*Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 482.

[1] Ibid. ii. 443, 444.

[2] See too on this ignorance, Tomline's *Life of Pitt*, iii. 450. It is a striking illustration of the extravagant misrepresentations of English policy which have been disseminated and believed on the Continent, that M. de Lamartine has ascribed the feebleness of the campaign of Brunswick, his failure to crush Dumouriez, his retreat before the French and his negotiation for a peace, mainly to the influence of Pitt, who, it appears, knew that the Duke wished his daughter to marry the Prince of Wales, and who, by flattering his hopes, was able to induce him to submit all his military and political proceedings to the direction of the Cabinet in London!—*Hist. des Girondins*, livre xxxvi. ch. 5.

the English policy. 'All my ambition,' he continues, 'is that I may at some time hereafter, when I am freed from all active concern in such a scene as this, have the inexpressible satisfaction of having been able to look back upon it and to tell myself that I have contributed to keep my country at least a little longer from sharing in all the evils of every sort that surround us. I am more and more convinced that this can only be done by keeping wholly and entirely aloof, and by watching much at home, but doing very little indeed; endeavouring to nurse up in the country a real determination to stand by the Constitution when it is attacked, as it most infallibly will be if these things go on; and above all trying to make the situation of the lower orders among us as good as it can be made. In this view I have seen with the greatest satisfaction the steps taken in the different parts of the country for increasing wages, which I hold to be a point of absolute necessity, and of a hundred times more importance than all that the most *doing* Government could do in twenty years towards keeping the country quiet. I trust we may again be enabled to contribute to the same object by the repeal of taxes, but of that we cannot yet be sure.'[1]

This last sentence is very remarkable when we consider the date at which it was written. It shows that the Government had not even yet decisively abandoned the policy of retrenchment which inspired the budget of 1792. It is now certain that the diminution of the naval and military forces, which was effected by Pitt in the beginning of that year, was a mistake, resting upon an entirely false estimate of the situation of Europe. It can only be said in defence of Pitt that his prediction of the course of events in France, if not more sagacious, was not more erroneous than that of all the wisest statesmen on the Continent.

There were two ways in which French affairs might affect England—by internal agitation and by their action on continental Powers. The proclamation against seditious writings in the summer had shown that the Government were not without anxiety at the great multiplication in England of such writings, and of societies corresponding with or affiliated to the French Jacobins. The second part of Paine's 'Rights of Man'

[1] Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, ii. 222–224.

had been an attack, as violent and as uncompromising as it is possible to conceive, upon the whole framework of monarchical and aristocratical government, and there could be no doubt whatever that it was of the nature of a seditious libel. A prosecution was directed against it, but Paine fled to France, where he was at once admitted to the rights of citizenship and elected a member of the Convention. The trial, however, proceeded, and a verdict of guilty was brought against him in his absence. For a time the circulation of libels diminished, but after the overthrow of the French monarchy on August 10, and especially after the retreat of the armies of the allies, all the republican societies in England started into a renewed activity. As early as August 14, Englishmen appeared at the bar of the French Assembly to congratulate it on the events of August 10; and in December Lord Grenville stated in Parliament that no less than ten different addresses from English subjects had been already presented to the National Convention, which had met in Paris in September.[1] One of these was voted on November 7 by 5,000 members of the 'corresponding societies' of London, Manchester, and other great towns. It spoke with indignation of the neutrality of the English Government. 'It is the duty,' the memorialists said, 'of true Britons to support and assist to the utmost of their power the defenders of the "Rights of Man," the propagators of human felicity, and to swear inviolable friendship to a nation which proceeds on the plan which you have adopted. . . . Frenchmen, you are already free, and Britons are preparing to become so;' and it expressed a hope of seeing 'a triple alliance, not of crowns, but of the peoples of America, France, and Great Britain.' A fortnight later, deputies from certain British societies appeared at the bar of the National Convention, announcing their intention of establishing a similar Convention in England and their hope 'that the troops of liberty will never lay down their arms as long as tyrants and slaves shall continue to exist.' 'Our wishes, citizen legislators,' they continued, 'render us impatient to see the moment of this grand change.' 'Royalty in Europe,' replied the President of the French Convention, 'is either destroyed, or on the point of perishing in the ruins of feodality. The Declaration of Rights

[1] Tomline's *Life of Pitt*, iii. 452.

placed by the side of thrones, is a devouring fire which will consume them. Worthy Republicans . . . the festival you have celebrated in honour of the French revolution is the prelude to the festival of nations.'[1]

These are but specimens of the movement which was continually going on. A bad harvest had produced much distress in the manufacturing districts. In November there were no less than 105 bankruptcies in England, and it was noticed that there had scarcely ever before been more than half that number in a single month.[2] Riots, springing from want of bread and want of work and low wages, were very frequent, and they usually assumed a republican character. In the county of Durham, at Shields, Sunderland, Carlisle, and Leeds, such disturbances were especially formidable. Busy missionaries were traversing the country preaching the coming millennium when French principles would have triumphed; when property would be divided; when monarchy, aristocracy, and established Churches would all be at an end. The words 'Liberty and Equality' might be seen written up at the market places. Paine's 'Rights of Man,' published in a very cheap form, had an enormous circulation. Rich democrats or democratic societies were distributing it by hundreds gratuitously among the workmen of the manufacturing towns. It was widely circulated in Erse among the Scotch Highlanders and in Welsh among the mountains of Wales, and it was said that the soldiers were everywhere tampered with.[3] The country was full of foreigners, and many of them, in the opinion of the best judges, were engaged in the propagandism. In Paris the uniform language was that all royalty was tyranny, that the mission of France was to sweep it from the world, that French principles were to prepare the way for French arms by raising nations against their rulers.

The amount of attention which a Government may wisely

[1] Marsh's *History of Politics*, i. 203–212. Chauvelin described the festival of the 'Society of the Revolution of 1688' (at which he thought it prudent not to be present) as one of the grandest triumphs of liberty ever known in England. The toasts were all for France, the 'Marseillaise' was sung, an address to the Convention was voted unanimously, and more than 1,000 persons were unable to get admission into the crowded room. (To Lebrun, Nov. 12, 1792.)

[2] Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iv. 254.

[3] Wilberforce's *Life*, ii. 1–5. *Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 469.

pay to treasonable writing, speaking, or even action, is not a matter that can be settled by any general rule. It varies infinitely with the character and habits of the nation and with the spirit of the time, and certainly the closing months of 1792 were not a period in which these things could be looked upon with indifference. The manifestly expansive, subversive, and epidemical character of the French Revolution, the dangerous national ambitions that were wedded to it, and the great part which the propagandism of opinions and the establishment of affiliated societies had actually borne in attracting or facilitating invasion, could not reasonably be doubted. At the same time the Government shrank much from measures of repression. On November 14, Grenville wrote an interesting letter to his brother, who had accused him of negligence. He assured Buckingham that the ministers were not indifferent, or inobservant of what was passing, but they believed that the accounts of disturbances were much exaggerated and that at all events the intervention of the Government should be only very sparingly and cautiously employed. 'If you look back,' he continued, 'to the last time in our history that these sort of things bore the same serious aspect that they now do—I mean the beginning of the Hanover reigns—you will find that the Protestant succession was established, not by the interference of a Secretary of State or Attorney-General in every individual instance, but by the exertions of every magistrate and officer, civil and military, throughout the country. . . . It is not unnatural, nor is it an unfavourable symptom, that people who are thoroughly frightened, as the body of landed gentlemen in this country are, should exaggerate these stories. . . . It is, however, not the less true that the danger exists. . . . The conquest of Flanders has, I believe, brought the business to a much nearer issue than any reasonable man could believe a month ago. The hands of the Government must be strengthened if the country is to be saved; but, above all, the work must not be left to the hands of Government, but every man must put his shoulder to it according to his rank and situation in life, or it will not be done.' [1]

It was impossible for English ministers not to be struck with the importance given in the French Convention to deputations

[1] Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, ii. 226–228.

from the most obscure English societies; with the manner in which the most obscure democratic addresses were officially published in France as the voice of the English people; with the honour of French citizenship ostentatiously conferred upon Priestley and Paine, and with the constant intercourse between the French representatives in England and the opponents of the Government. But a much more serious provocation was soon given by the decree of November 19, in which the French Convention, without drawing any distinction between hostile and neutral Governments, formally announced that the French nation would grant fraternity and assistance to all nations that desired to regain their liberty, and directed the Executive Power to order the French generals to put this decree into execution. In order that it should be universally known, the Convention commanded that it should be translated into all languages.

This decree in its obvious signification was an invitation to all nations to revolt against their rulers. In the new Parisian dialect, not only the most mitigated monarchy, but even aristocratic republics like Holland and Switzerland were tyrannies, and the French Government now pledged itself to assist revolted subjects by force of arms, even though their Governments had not given the smallest provocation to France. The decree was in perfect harmony with the language of the most conspicuous French politicians, and with the hopes or promises held out by French emissaries in many lands; but it was an interference with the internal affairs of other countries at least as gross as that which was committed by Lewis XIV. when he recognised the son of James II. as King of England. It was a provocation much more serious than the greater number of those which had produced wars during the eighteenth century.

It is quite certain, however, that the decree of November 19 if taken alone would never have induced Pitt to engage in hostilities with France. The attitude of the French Convention reluctantly convinced him of the necessity of taking special measures for the protection of order at home, but nothing short of grave and manifest external danger could provoke him to draw the sword.

In my own judgment, one of the most remarkable features in his foreign policy is the apathy or at least the quiescence with

which he witnessed the French conquest of the Belgic Provinces. Ever since the English Revolution, it had been one of the first objects of English foreign policy to secure this tract of country from the dominion and the ascendency of France. Its invasion by Lewis XIV. first made the war of the Spanish succession inevitable. Its security had been the main object of the Barrier Treaty, and we have already seen the importance attached to this point in the negotiations of 1789. If Pitt's father had been at the head of affairs, there can, I think, be little doubt that the entry of the French troops into the Belgic Provinces would have been immediately followed by English intervention. It is indeed true that one of the results of the recent policy of the Emperors had been that England no longer guaranteed the Austrian dominion in Flanders. Joseph II. by expelling the Dutch garrisons had torn the Barrier Treaty into shreds, and the Convention which had been signed at the Hague in December 1790, by which Prussia and the maritime Powers guaranteed these provinces to Austria, had not been ratified, on account of the refusal of Leopold to grant the full and promised measure of their ancient liberties.[1] But although there was no treaty obligation, it was a matter of manifest political importance to England that Brussels, Ostend, and, above all, Antwerp, should not be in the hands of the French. All these had now been conquered, and although the French Government and their representatives in England had publicly disclaimed ideas of aggrandisement, although they represented the invasion of the Belgic Provinces as a mere matter of military necessity, and contented themselves as yet with decreeing that they should be for ever sundered from the Imperial rule, it needed but little foresight to perceive that, in the event of the final victory of France, they would remain French territory. Savoy was already formally incorporated into the French Republic. In Belgium, only a very few weeks had passed before the French, contrary to the wishes of the people, began a general confiscation of ecclesiastical property, forced their *assignats* in circulation, and treated the country exactly as a French province.

[1] See Coxe's *House of Austria*, ii. 695–697. Prussia, as we have seen, afterwards guaranteed the Austrian Netherlands, but neither England nor Holland had done so.

There is a large amount of chance in the judgments which history ultimately forms of statesmen. If events had taken a somewhat different course, it is probable that Pitt's foreign policy would now have been chiefly censured for having, without an effort to prevent it, suffered the whole of Belgium to fall into the hands of France. But whether the acquiescence of the English Government was right or wrong, it at least furnished one more emphatic proof of the ardent desire of Pitt to avoid a war. The line which he adopted was perfectly clear. The invasion and conquest of Belgium he determined not to make a *casus belli*. The contingency of France retaining it in spite of her disclaimers was not yet brought into question. But England was connected with Holland by the closest and strictest alliance, and she had most formally guaranteed the existing Dutch Constitution. If therefore Holland and her Constitution were in real danger, England was bound, both in honour and policy, to draw the sword.

The justification or condemnation of English intervention in the great French war turns mainly upon this question. We have already seen that there had long existed in Holland a democratic and revolutionary party which was violently opposed to the House of Orange, which had been defeated by the efforts of Prussia and England, and which, before the French Revolution, had been in close alliance with France. We have seen also how bitterly the defeat of that party had been resented in Paris; how warmly its refugees were welcomed by the French Revolutionists, and how early the overthrow of the existing Dutch Constitution was spoken of as a possible result of the Revolution. In January 1792, a deputation of 'Dutch Patriots' had presented a petition to the National Assembly, describing their plans for establishing liberty in Holland, and restricting the authority of the Stadholder, and requesting the favour of France, and the President had replied that the French people would always be their allies as long as they were the friends of liberty.[1] In the following June, Lord Gower mentioned to the English Government that the French intended to raise for their service a body of between three and four thousand Dutch patriots, and in the same month Grenville informed Gower that Lord Auckland had been writing

[1] *Annual Register*, 1792, pp. 352, 353.

from Holland 'that a project was supposed to be in agitation for an attack upon some of the Dutch ports from Dunkirk, by the legion of Dutch patriots now raising.' Gower at first regarded this report as wholly untrue, but he soon after wrote: 'I must retract my opinion that apprehensions entertained in Holland with regard to the Dutch legion are perfectly ill-founded. It was originally to have consisted of 4,250 men, but it is now to be augmented to 6,000.'[1]

The apprehensions of danger, however, in this quarter did not become acute until after the totally unexpected issue of the expedition of the Duke of Brunswick, and the triumphant invasion of the Austrian Netherlands. A great revolutionary army flushed with victory was now on the borders of Holland, and a rising of the 'Patriotic' party in that country might at any moment be expected.

Lord Auckland was then English minister at the Hague. On November 6—the day on which the battle of Jemmapes was fought—Grenville wrote him a confidential letter describing the extremely critical condition of Europe, and defining the course which the English Government intended to pursue. It was written in much the same strain as the almost contemporaneous letter to Lord Buckingham from which I have already quoted. 'I am every day,' he said, 'more and more confirmed in my opinion that, both in order to preserve our own domestic quiet and to secure some other parts, at least, of Europe free from the miseries of anarchy, this country and Holland ought to remain quiet as long as it is possible to do so, even with some degree of forbearance and tolerance beyond what would in other circumstances have been judged right.' It appears probable that the Austrians and Prussians will make another campaign against France, but in the opinion of Grenville 'the re-establishment of order in France can be effected only by a long course of intestine struggles,' and foreign intervention will only serve the cause of anarchy. English ministers consider that the best chance of preserving England from the dangers of the Revolution is to abstain resolutely from all interference with the struggle on the Continent, and they strongly recommend a similar course to the Dutch. 'Their local situation and the neighbour-

[1] Gower to Grenville, June 22, 29; Grenville to Gower, June 12, 1792.

hood of Germany, Liége, and Flanders, may certainly render the danger more imminent, but it does not, I think, alter the reasoning as to the means of meeting it; and those means will, I think, be always best found in the preservation of the external peace of the Republic, and in that attention to its internal situation which external peace, alone, will allow its Government to give to that object.' The States-General desired to know what course the English Government would pursue if the Republican Government in France notified its establishment, and demanded to be acknowledged. Grenville answered that no step of this kind was likely to be taken till the new French Constitution was settled by the Assembly, and before that time the whole aspect of affairs may have changed. If, however, contrary to his expectation, such a demand were at once made, it would probably be declined, but declined in such terms that England would be free to acknowledge the Republican Government in France at a later period, if such a Government should be fully established.[1]

A week later the danger had become far more imminent by the flight of the Austrian Government from Brussels, and it now appeared in the highest degree probable that the army of Dumouriez would speedily press on to Holland. Dutch 'patriots' were going over to him in great numbers, and it was reported that he had boasted that he would dine at the Hague on New Year's Day.[2] Under these circumstances the English ministers considered that in the interests of peace the time had come for England to depart from her system of absolute reserve, and they took two important steps, which we must now examine.

The first of these was to send to Lord Auckland a formal declaration which was to be presented to the States-General and to be made public, assuring Holland of the inviolable friendship of England and of her full determination to execute at all times, and with the utmost good faith, all the stipulations of the Treaty of Alliance she had entered into in 1788. The King is persuaded, the memorial said, that the strict neutrality, which the United Republic as well as England had kept, will be sufficient to save her from all danger of a violation of her territory or an

[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 464–467.

[2] This is mentioned in one of Lord Auckland's letters (Record Office) in the beginning of November.

interference on the part of either belligerent with her internal affairs. But as the theatre of war was now brought almost to the frontier of the Republic, and as much uneasiness had naturally arisen, his Majesty thought it right to give the States-General this renewed assurance. He recommended them to repress firmly all attempts to disturb internal tranquillity, and he expressed his full belief that a close union between the two countries would contribute most effectually to the welfare of both and to the general tranquillity of Europe.[1]

We have letters both from Pitt and Grenville explaining the motives of this step.[2] Lord Auckland had represented, no doubt with great truth, the danger of Holland as extreme, and in the event either of an invasion or an insurrection England was bound to interfere. 'However unfortunate it would be,' wrote Pitt, 'to find this country in any shape committed, it seems absolutely impossible to hesitate as to supporting our ally in case of necessity, and the explicit declaration of our sentiments is the most likely way to prevent the case occurring.' Such a declaration appeared to the English Government the best measure for preventing either a rising in Holland or an infringement of the Dutch territory, and although it did not ultimately save Holland from invasion it is certain that it greatly strengthened the Dutch Government, and discouraged any attempts at local insurrection.

It was plain, however, that unless the war in the Netherlands was speedily arrested, the chances of preserving the Dutch territory inviolate were infinitesimally small. On the same day, therefore, on which the English Government despatched their memorial to Holland, they sent instructions to the English ambassadors at Berlin and Vienna, directing them to break the silence on French affairs they had hitherto observed in their communications with those Courts. 'These instructions,' wrote Pitt, 'are necessarily in very general terms, as, in the ignorance of the designs of Austria and Prussia, and in the uncertainty as to what events every day may produce, it seems impossible to decide definitively at present on the line which

[1] *Annual Register*, 1792, pp. 352, 353.

[2] See the letter of Pitt in Rose's *Diaries and Correspondence*, i. 114–116, and the letter of Grenville to Auckland (in the Record Office) Nov. 13, 1792.

we ought to pursue, except as far as relates to Holland. Perhaps some opening may arise which may enable us to contribute to the termination of the war between different Powers in Europe, leaving France (which I believe is the best way) to arrange its own internal affairs as it can. The whole situation, however, becomes so delicate and critical that I have thought it right to request the presence of all the members of the Cabinet who can without too much inconvenience give their attendance.'[1]

The letters of instruction to Eden and Keith are substantially the same, but a little more may be gleaned from the former than from the latter, as Prussia was on much more intimate terms with England than Austria. The King, it was said, knows very little of the plans of the Courts of Prussia and Austria in France, or of their views of the termination of the war. 'His Majesty having so repeatedly declined to make himself a party to that enterprise forbore to urge for any more distinct explanation,' but 'the unforeseen events which have arisen, and most particularly the success of the French arms in Flanders, have now brought forward considerations in which the common interests and engagements of his Majesty and the King of Prussia are deeply concerned.' There are grave reasons to fear 'for the security and tranquillity of the United Provinces,' and the King now asks for confidential communications from the Court of Berlin. His object is, if possible, to assist in 'putting an end to a business so unfortunate for all those who have been engaged in it, and which threatens in its consequences to disturb the tranquillity of the rest of Europe.' Eden, however, is to be extremely cautious 'not to commit this Court to any opinion with respect to the propriety and practicability of any particular mode' of effecting this object. He may say that, as the King knows nothing about the plans of the two Courts, he could give no instructions, and if he finds that the Prussian King is reluctant to make communications, he is at once to drop the subject.[2]

It cannot be said that in these very cautious proceedings

[1] Rose's *Diaries*, i. 115. This letter is addressed to the Marquis of Stafford. It is curious as showing how little the attendance of all the members of the Cabinet seems to have been considered a matter of course.

[2] Grenville to Eden, Nov. 13. See too Grenville to Keith, Nov. 13, 1792.

the English Government in any way departed from its neutrality, nor can they, I think, be regarded as at all in excess of what the danger of the situation warranted. Scarcely a day now passed which did not bring disquieting intelligence. From Zealand and from Ostend, it was reported that the French meant to send a squadron to force the passage of the Scheldt, and the rumour obtained some confirmation when two French gunboats appeared on the coast of Holland. It was at first said that they came to buy horses, but the commander soon asked the Dutch Government on the part of Dumouriez for permission to sail up the Scheldt for the purpose of assisting in reducing the town and citadel of Antwerp, though he must have well known that the Dutch could not grant such permission without a plain violation of their neutrality. There were reports from Breda of an intended insurrectionary movement. There were fears of complications from the crowds of emigrants who were now pouring into Holland from Liége and Brabant. There was a question whether it would not be advisable at once to send English ships of war to Flushing. Staremberg, the Austrian minister, succeeded in bribing one of the officials of the French embassy, and, by his means, obtaining a copy of a confidential letter from Dumouriez to De Maulde, the French minister at the Hague. In this letter, Dumouriez promised that he would try to prevent the recall of De Maulde, and he added: 'I count upon carrying liberty to the Batavians, as I have already done to the Belgians, and the Revolution will be accomplished in Holland in such a manner that things will be brought back to the point in which they were in 1788.'

Auckland believed this letter to be certainly genuine, but he did not despair of peace, nor did he think the time had yet come when it was necessary to send English ships to Flushing. It was important, he said, to avoid giving signs of apprehension or distrust, though he would be glad to know that there was some English naval force in the Downs which could be forthcoming at short notice. The season of the year was very unfavourable for invasion. 'Those who ought to know best the interior of this country,' he wrote, 'continue to assure me that they see no immediate ground of alarm, and the exterior will, for the present, be (I hope) defended by nature and by the

seasons. It would have a great effect, and might possibly save mankind from a deluge of general confusion and misery, if the loyalty and good sense of England could be roused into a manifestation of abhorrence of the wickedness and folly of the levelling doctrines.' Possibly the English Government might even now be able to arrange the preliminaries of a general pacification of Europe.[1]

Grenville also took at first a somewhat hopeful view. While sending Auckland alarming reports which he had received from Ostend, he expressed his belief that they were exaggerated, though they must not be neglected. He rejoiced to hear that the English declaration of friendship to Holland had a good effect, and hoped that Auckland would do all in his power to sustain confidence. 'I am strongly inclined,' he wrote, 'to believe that it is the present intention of the prevailing party in France to respect the rights of this country and of the Republic, but it will undoubtedly be necessary that the strictest attention should be given to any circumstance which may seem to indicate a change in this respect.' It was impossible, however, to disguise the fact that the prospect was full of the gravest danger and uncertainty, and the demands of the commander of the French ships of war seemed to indicate a plain desire to force on a quarrel. Such preparations as could be made without attracting much notice, had already been made in England. All hemp in England had been bought by the Government lest it should be exported to France, and Grenville recommended a similar measure to the Dutch. The French appeared to have as yet imported little hemp, and might therefore have difficulty in equipping their navy. The Government did not at present think it wise to send an English fleet either to Flushing or to the Downs.[2]

The fury of the thunderstorm is less trying to the nerves of men than the sultry, oppressive, and ominous calm that precedes it; and it was through such a calm that England was now passing. To the last letter from which I have quoted, Grenville appended a postscript announcing proceedings in Paris which at last convinced him that war was inevitable. On

[1] Auckland to Grenville, Nov. 23, 25, 1792.

[2] Grenville to Auckland, Nov. 23, 25, 26, 1792.

November 16, the Executive Council at Paris adopted two memorable resolutions abolishing as contrary to the laws of nature the treaty rights of the Dutch to the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt and of the Meuse, and ordering the commanders of the French armies to continue to pursue the Austrians, even upon the territory of Holland, if they retired there. Three days later the Convention passed its decree, promising French assistance to all nations that revolted against their rulers.

The last of these measures has already been considered. Its significance, at a time when there was a triumphant French army in Austrian Flanders, and a defeated but still powerful party in Holland which was notoriously hostile to the House of Orange and notoriously in sympathy with France, was too manifest to be mistaken. The decree of November 19 was obviously intended to rekindle the civil war which had so lately been extinguished, and it made it almost certain that even the most partial insurrection would be immediately made the pretext for a French invasion. The direction given to the French commander to pursue the Austrians if they retired into Dutch territory was a flagrant violation of the laws of nations, while the opening of the Scheldt was a plain violation of the treaty rights of the Dutch. Their sovereignty over that river dated from the Peace of Westphalia by which the independence of Holland was first recognised. It had been confirmed by the treaty of 1785, in which France herself acted as guarantee;[1] and it was one of those rights which England, by the treaty of alliance in 1788, was most formally bound to defend. It would be impossible to conceive a more flagrant or more dangerous violation of treaties than this action of the French. It implied that they were absolute sovereigns of the Austrian Netherlands, for these provinces alone were interested in the question. It established a precedent which, if it were admitted, would invalidate the whole public law of Europe, for it assumed that the most formal treaties were destitute of all binding force if they appeared in the light of the new French philosophy to be contrary to the laws of nature or 'remnants of feudal servitude;' and the decree of the French Executive was confirmed by the Convention, immediately after the memorial to the Dutch States-General, by which England

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxx. 47; Marsh's *Hist. of Politics*, i. 194–198.

had pledged herself in the most formal manner to fulfil all the obligations she had assumed by the treaty of 1788. Nor was it possible to say that the measure was of no practical importance. Its immediate object was to enable the French to send ships of war to attack the citadel of Antwerp. If the Dutch acceded to the demand in spite of the protest of the Imperial minister, they would at once be forced out of their neutrality. But beyond this, if the navigation of the Scheldt was open to armed vessels it would enable the French, as the Dutch truly said, to carry their troops into the heart of Holland. A great French army was already on its border. Refugees from Holland had been enrolled by thousands; there were sufficient small boats collected at Ostend to transport an army; and there was an active French party in Holland itself. Could it be questioned that the opening of the Scheldt formed a leading part of a plan for the conquest of Holland? Could it be doubted that if the mouth of the river passed into French hands it would, in the event of a war, give great facilities for an attack upon England?

It is impossible, I think, to consider all the circumstances of the case without concluding that the decree was an act of gross and deliberate provocation, that it was part of a system of policy which plainly aimed at the conquest of Holland, and that England could not acquiesce in it with any regard either for her honour or her interests. The last assertion has indeed been denied on the ground that Joseph II. had attempted to carry a similar measure in 1785 and that England had remained passive. But this argument is obviously futile. England was at that time not in alliance with Holland; she had but just made peace with her after a long war, and the act of Joseph was not one which in any way affected English interests, for Austria never had any maritime force and could not, under any circumstances, become a danger to England.

All the proceedings of the French only conspired to deepen the impression which the decrees of November 16 and 19 had produced. A letter written by Clavière, a member of the French Executive Council, was intercepted, in which he wrote that if Holland wished to live at peace with France she must take care to receive no Prussians or Austrians into any part of her territory, for the Republic would leave 'neither truce nor repose

in any quarter to her enemies either secret or open.'[1] When Dumouriez conquered Liége, the French general Eustache[2] appeared at the gates of Maestricht, one of the strongest frontier towns of the United Provinces, and he sent a message to the Prince of Hesse, who commanded, demanding that 15,000 French soldiers might pass through the town. The Prince replied that to give such permission would be contrary to the Dutch neutrality. Eustache rejoined in a menacing letter, stating that he had two objects, to express the fraternal disposition of the French Republic towards the Republic of Holland, and to recommend the Governor at once to expel from Maestricht all the enemies of France. He would be sorry, he said, to act with violence, but his orders were strict and formal, 'to punish as the enemies of the French Republic all the protectors of the Austrians and of the emigrants.' The Dutch persisted in refusing to allow the French to enter Maestricht, and Eustache soon dropped his demand, but the whole episode was a characteristic and alarming illustration of the manner in which the Republic was disposed to treat neutral Powers.[3] It is now known that at this time an immediate invasion of Holland was fully intended by Dumouriez, but at the last moment the Executive Council shrank from a step which would at once produce a war with England.[4]

Still more serious was the conduct of the commanders of the French war-ships at the mouth of the Scheldt. The Dutch took the only course which was possible consistently with their neutrality, and refused the permission that was asked; but the French vessels sailed up the Scheldt to Antwerp in defiance of their prohibition.[5]

There were at the same time evident efforts made to stimulate the French party in Holland. A report was industriously propagated 'that the disposition of the people of England is become such as to put it out of the power of his Majesty's Government to give in any event any species of succour' to Holland,[6] and Lord Auckland stated that it was known with certainty that large sums

[1] Auckland to Grenville, Nov. 27, 1792.

[2] Though in the French service, he was by birth an American, and wrote in English. Auckland to Grenville, Dec. 18, 1792.

[3] Ibid. Dec. 2, 4, 1792.

[4] *Mémoires du Dumouriez*, iii. 380; Morris's *Letters; Works*, ii. 254.

[5] Auckland to Grenville, Dec. 4, 1792.

[6] Ibid.

had been expended by the French Executive Council for the purpose of exciting simultaneous insurrections in the great towns of England and in Holland.[1] Auckland expressed his perfect confidence that in England this plan would be foiled. but, he added, 'in this Republic the case is different. . . . The animosities which were necessarily created by the transactions of 1787 have not yet subsided, and are now combined with the wild democratic notions of the day, and are encouraged by the example of the Austrian Netherlands and the near neighbourhood and multiplied successes of the French armies. I nevertheless hope that interior tranquillity may (for the present at least) be maintained.' The Prince of Orange one day hastily summoned Auckland, and assured him that he had received intelligence that Dumouriez had actually sent orders from Antwerp for a descent upon Holland, which was to be the signal for an insurrection. De Maulde, he was informed, had pointed out on the map the places at which the French meant to penetrate into Holland, adding that it was all Dumouriez's doing, that, for his own part, he thought it very imprudent, and that in fifteen days all communication with England would be stopped.[2]

De Maulde was suddenly and unexpectedly recalled by his Government and replaced by a man named Tainville, a violent Jacobin, 'of brutal manners and evident indiscretion.' The first act of his mission was 'to make himself the colporteur' of an incendiary work of Condorcet entitled 'Adresse aux Bataves,' which he brought with him.[3]

De Maulde was by no means inclined to acquiesce patiently in his dismissal, and Auckland was present at his farewell interview with the Dutch Pensionary. De Maulde, he says, burst out into a violent invective against his Government, but still believed that Dumouriez would protect him and maintain him in

[1] Auckland to Grenville, Dec. 7, 1792.

[2] Ibid. Dec. 5, 7, 1792.

[3] Ibid. Dec. 7, 1792. Lord Stormont afterwards quoted in the House of Lords the following passage from this production of Condorcet, which gives an idea of its character: 'So long as the earth is stained by the existence of a king, and by the absurdity of hereditary government, so long as this shameful production of ignorance and folly remains unproscribed by the universal consent of mankind, union between free states is their primary want, their dearest interest. George III. sees, with anxious surprise, that throne totter under him which is founded on sophistry, and which Republican truths have sapped to its very foundation.' Adolphus, v. 238.

Holland. Referring to a former conference with Auckland, he expressed his hope that the English minister's views of a pacification were unchanged. Auckland answered that a month ago he individually would have gladly promoted a peace on the basis even of an acknowledgment of the French Republic, provided the royal family were put in security and well treated, but that now everything was changed. Savoy was annexed. Flanders, Brabant, Liége, and the districts on the Rhine were undergoing the same fate. A war of unprovoked depredation was carried on against the Italian States. The Dutch Republic had been insulted by the *arrêté* relating to the Scheldt, and the Convention had passed a decree nearly tantamount to a declaration of war against every kingdom in Europe. De Maulde said little in reply; but when he was sounded as to the views of Dumouriez he expressed a wish to go to that general, and bring back a full account, as soon as his letters from Paris enabled him to settle his pecuniary matters. 'The Pensionary,' Auckland says, 'understood what was meant; I said nothing and left them together.' The result was that Auckland agreed to 'lend' De Maulde five hundred pounds, and the Pensionary would probably do more, in order that the French envoy might go to Dumouriez and might furnish them with useful intelligence. Auckland and the Pensionary both believed that by De Maulde, and by a certain Joubert who was in their pay,[1] full information might be obtained respecting the conduct and plans of the 'patriots.' 'It is hateful and disgusting work,' Auckland added, 'to have any concern with such instruments, and the Pensionary, who has been so good as to relieve me from the whole detail, seems to suffer under it.'[2]

The channels of information which were opened proved very useful. Three days after the last letter Auckland wrote that he had procured, 'at a moderate expense,' the French minister's instructions and part of his ministerial correspondence. These documents he considered so important that he did not venture to trust them to his secretary or clerk, but copied them out with his own hand. The instructions of De Maulde were dated

[1] It appears from subsequent letters that Joubert was De Maulde's secretary.

[2] Auckland to Grenville, Dec. 10, 1792.

August 25, 1792, at a time when orders were sent for the first invasion of Brabant and Flanders. Their purport was that the first object of French policy in Holland should be to encourage secretly the 'patriots' opposed to the Stadholder, to keep up relations with them and to encourage them to look forward to French assistance. This must, however, be done cautiously, for a 'premature revolution in Holland might draw down upon us all the forces of England and Prussia.' There could be no longer any question that a revolution in Holland had, from the very beginning of the campaign in Flanders, been a fixed object of the governing party in Paris, and many of the letters of the 'patriots' to the French minister at the same time fell into the hands of Auckland. They were on the whole reassuring, for they showed 'rather a mischievous disposition than a formed design.'[1]

A few days later, a German, travelling with a passport from the magistrates of Amsterdam, was arrested at Utrecht, and he was found to be the bearer of a packet of letters to Dumouriez. Most of them were of little importance, but among them were three papers of the highest consequence. There was a long letter from De Maulde giving a very detailed plan for an invasion of Holland through Arnhem, and concluding 'that, unless Holland could be wrested from England, there would be no security for France under any pacification.' There was a letter from Tainville, the successor of De Maulde, urging Dumouriez to come forward and 'relieve the friends of Freedom and of France from a tyrannical aristocracy,' and there was a plan of invasion drawn up by a French officer who was a prisoner for debt at Amsterdam.[2]

De Maulde, almost immediately after this arrest, had an interview with Auckland, at which he talked very pacifically, and he appears to have been wholly unconscious that his despatch was intercepted. Auckland was inclined to believe that he did not really wish for an invasion, as he was looking forward to personal advantages from services to be rendered during the winter, which would be interrupted if it took place. The intercepted letter, he thought, was probably part of a plan, perhaps a concerted plan, for giving an impression of his zeal. He was

[1] Auckland to Grenville, Dec. 13, 1792. [2] Ibid. Dec. 21, 1792.

confirmed in this impression by a later intercepted despatch addressed to Paris. It was full of falsehoods in its account of what had taken place, but it appeared to Auckland to lean towards peace, for it represented both England and Holland as desiring it, and suggested that it might be inexpedient to draw down these Powers and possibly also Spain upon France.[1]

It was impossible to deny the extremely critical nature of the situation, and the evident intention to invade Holland, but on the whole Auckland even now took a sanguine view. The condition of the French Republic seemed so precarious, the madness of provoking England to war was so manifest, the season so unfavourable for invasion, and the continued internal tranquillity of Holland so reassuring, that he had always hoped that the storm might pass. 'I am more than ever convinced,' he wrote, at the end of November, 'that if this Republic and England can keep out of the confusion for a few months, a great part of the danger will cease.'[2] 'We cannot doubt,' he wrote a week later, 'that it has been the intention to attempt an invasion of some part of this Republic by troops and vessels from Antwerp, and we have reason to apprehend that the project is not yet laid aside. Such an enterprise, if we could rely on the interior of the Provinces, would be contemptible, and, even under the present fermentation, at this season of the year it would be rash in the extreme; but M. Dumouriez, with such a crowd of adventurers at his disposal, may be capable of risking the loss of 4,000 or 5,000.' The effect of the arrival of some English ships of war in Holland he now thought might be very great. 'It is possible that the whole end might be answered if any one or more of the number could arrive soon, and the necessity might perhaps cease before the remainder can quit the English ports. . . . If (as I incline to hope) nothing hostile should happen, their stay would be very short, and the impression of such an attention would have a great and permanent effect.'[3] 'I know,' he wrote some time later, 'that the postponing of the war is unfashionable in England, but I lean towards it from a belief that France is exhausted by her expenses, and may suddenly fall to pieces if our attack should not

[1] Auckland to Grenville, Dec. 21, 27, 1792.

[2] Ibid. Nov. 27, 1792.

[3] Ibid. Dec. 4, 1792.

excite a paroxysm of desperation which may prove very dangerous.'[1]

It was plain that the time had fully come for England to take a decided part, and an important despatch of Lord Grenville, dated December 4, and written immediately after he had been informed of the demand of the French to enter Maestricht, showed the light in which the English Government regarded the situation. 'The conduct of the French,' he wrote, 'in all these late proceedings, appears to his Majesty's servants to indicate a fixed and settled design of hostility against this country and the Republic. The demand that the Dutch should suffer their rights, guaranteed to them by France, to be set aside by the decree of the Convention, and the neutrality of their territory to be violated to the prejudice of Austria; the similar demand for a passage through Maestricht, in contradiction to every principle of the law of nations, particularly those so much relied on by France in the case of the German Princes; the recent decree authorising the French generals to pursue their enemies into any neutral territory; that by which the Convention appears to have promised assistance and support to the disturbers of any established Government in any country, explained and exemplified as it is by the almost undisguised attempts now making on their part to incite insurrections here and in Holland; all these things afford strong proofs of their disposition, independently even of the offensive manner in which the conduct and situation of the neutral nations has recently been treated, even in the communications of the ministers themselves to the Convention.' Under these circumstances, his Majesty has thought it necessary to arm, and he hopes that Holland will do the same. 'The King is decidedly of opinion that the Republic should persist in her refusal to admit the passage of the French troops through any part of her territory. While the neutrality of the Republic was beneficial to France, his Majesty uniformly recommended an adherence to it, and to depart from that principle now would be to give to the Court of Vienna the justest ground of complaint, and even a legitimate cause of war. Whatever may be the consequence, the King is of opinion that the Republic can maintain its indepen-

[1] Auckland to Grenville, Dec. 21, 1792.

dence only by observing the same line of conduct in the present case which it has uniformly maintained in all the different circumstances which have hitherto arisen. At the same time . . . the King has thought it right not to omit such steps as could conduce to a pacific explanation,' and he has accordingly expressed his full readiness to receive privately and unofficially any agent the French might send, though he would not receive him publicly and officially.[1]

The conviction that a war with France was inevitable, and the conviction that it was necessary to take some decisive steps to stop the active correspondence of English democratic societies with Paris, had now fully forced themselves on the English ministers. It was on November 28 that the deputation from the English societies appeared at the bar of the Convention, congratulating that body in the name of the English people on 'the triumphs of Liberty,' predicting that other nations would soon follow in the same 'career of useful changes,' and declaring that the example of France had made revolutions so easy that addresses of congratulation might soon be sent to 'a National Convention of England.' I have quoted the enthusiastic language in which the President of the Convention welcomed his 'fellow-Republicans' from England, and the confident arrogance with which he announced the speedy downfall of all the monarchies of Europe.[2] On December 1, the English Government replied by a proclamation calling out the militia, on the ground that 'the utmost industry is still employed by evil-disposed persons within this kingdom, acting in concert with persons in foreign parts, with a view to subvert the laws and established constitution of this realm . . . that a spirit of tumult and disorder thereby excited has lately shown itself in acts of riot and insurrection,' and that it was therefore necessary to strengthen the force which may be in readiness to support the civil magistrate. By a second proclamation, the meeting of Parliament was accelerated, and it was summoned for December 13.[3]

Great military and naval activity now prevailed in England. A powerful fleet was prepared for the Downs. Ships of war

[1] Grenville to Auckland, Dec. 4, 1792.

[2] Marsh's *Hist. of Politics*, i. 203–212.

[3] Ibid. i. 260–262.

were put under orders for Flushing, and inquiries were made into the possibility, in case of war, of attacking Guadaloupe, Martinique, and St. Lucia.[1] Some information had been obtained which made the Government seriously anxious for the safety of the Tower and of the City; strenuous measures were taken for their protection,[2] and the necessity for a considerable increase both in the army and navy was one of the first reasons assigned for the immediate assembly of Parliament.

Even before Parliament met, it was becoming evident that the schism in the Opposition was deepening. Lord Malmesbury relates that at two dinners of Whig leaders which were held at Burlington House to discuss the policy of the party, Fox declared that the alarm was totally groundless; that there was not only no insurrection or imminent danger of invasion, but even no unusual symptom of discontent, and that for his own part he was determined to oppose the calling out of the militia. 'None of the company,' Lord Malmesbury says, 'agreed with him.' 'No one, not even Fox himself, called in doubt the necessity of assisting the Dutch if attacked, but *he*, and *he* only, seemed inclined to think the opening of the Scheldt was not a sufficient motive. . . . His principles, too, bore the strongest marks of a leaning towards Republicanism.' The Duke of Portland, and other leaders of the party, wished that in the dangerous condition of the country nothing should be done to enfeeble the Government or impair the impression of unanimity, and that therefore no amendment should be moved to the address. Fox put an end to all discussion by declaring, with an oath, 'that there was no address at this moment Pitt could frame, he would not propose an amendment to, and divide the House upon.'[3]

The King's Speech emphatically recalled the fidelity with which the English Government, as well as the States-General, had observed their policy of neutrality during the war and their complete abstention from all interference with the internal

[1] See a curious minute of an interview between Lord Hawkesbury and a gentleman from Guadaloupe, Dec. 5, 1792 (French Correspondence in the Record Office).

[2] Marsh's *Hist. of Politics*, i. 222–227; Buckingham's *Memoirs*, ii. 230, 231.

[3] Malmesbury's *Diaries and Correspondence*, ii. 473–475.

affairs of France. It was impossible, however, for the King to witness without the most serious uneasiness 'the strong and increasing indications' of an intention to 'excite disturbances in other countries, to disregard the rights of neutral nations, and to pursue views of conquest and aggrandisement;' and the French had taken measures towards Holland which were 'neither conformable to the laws of nations nor to the positive stipulations of existing treaties.' In addition to calling out the militia and augmenting the army and navy, the Government thought it necessary to introduce an Alien Bill, placing for a short time all foreigners in England under the supervision of the Government, prohibiting them from bringing into the country arms or ammunition, and authorising the Government, if necessary, to expel them from the kingdom.

Pitt was not present at the first few debates of the Session. He had just received from the King the lucrative office of Warden of the Cinque Ports, and had not yet been re-elected, and the chief part in opposing Fox was taken by Windham, who had now decisively separated himself from his former leader, and who strenuously maintained the necessity for the measures of precaution which the Government recommended. The first speeches of Fox were in the highest degree violent and incendiary. In public, as in private,[1] he set no bounds to his exultation at the defeat of Brunswick, or to his insulting language when speaking of the two Powers with which England was likely to be soon in alliance, and he entirely blamed the reserve which the English Government had hitherto maintained. 'From the moment they knew a league was formed against France,' he said, 'this country ought to have interfered. France had justice completely on her side, and we, by a prudent negotiation with the other Powers, might have prevented the horrid scenes which were afterwards exhibited. . . . Thank God, Nature had been true to herself, tyranny had been defeated, and those who had fought for freedom were triumphant!' The King's Speech had said that 'the industry employed to excite discontent on various pretexts and in different parts of the kingdom has appeared to proceed from a desire to attempt the destruction of our happy Constitution and the subversion of all

[1] See Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 372.

order and government;' and the Lord Mayor of London had said, with incontestable truth, that societies were formed in London under pretence of merely discussing constitutional questions, but with the real object of propagating seditious doctrines. 'By this new scheme of tyranny,' said Fox, 'we are not to judge of the conduct of men by their overt acts, but are to arrogate to ourselves at once the providence and the power of the Deity, to arraign a man for his secret thoughts, and to punish him because we choose to believe him guilty!' Pursuing this strain, he proceeded, in a long declamatory passage, which was not innocuous, although it was astonishingly absurd, to accuse the English Government of meditating, not only the destruction of the Constitution, but also a system of cruelty and oppression worse than any devised by the See of Rome, or the Spanish Inquisition, or any other tyrant, spiritual or temporal.[1]

This was the kind of language employed in a momentous crisis of English history by the leader of one of the great parties in the State. Fox, however, though he could be one of the most reckless and declamatory of demagogues, was also one of the most skilful of debaters, and as the discussion proceeded, and as it became evident that the dominant sentiment even on his own side of the House was decidedly against him, his language grew more moderate and plausible. French Revolutionists ceased to appear as angels of light and freedom. He spoke with much and probably with sincere horror[2] of the approaching murder of the King. He declared that the progress of the French arms in the Low Countries was justly alarming to Europe, and might be dangerous to England, that the spirit which under Lewis XIV. menaced the liberties of Europe might influence, and actually had influenced, the conduct of the French, and although he opposed the calling out of the militia, he cordially supported the augmentation of the Army and Navy. To any measures restricting the proceedings of democratic societies at home, he was inexorably opposed, and he urged that the proper way of combating discontent was to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts, to reform the Parliament, and to eman-

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxx. 18, 19, 60, 61.

[2] I have already noticed the letters Fox wrote to Barnave and other politicians in France in favour of the King, after the failure of the flight of Varennes. See vol. v.

cipate the Irish Catholics. He acknowledged reluctantly, that if the Dutch called on us to treat the opening of the Scheldt as a *casus fœderis* we were bound to do so, but he denied that they had done so. He attributed the hostility of the English Government towards the Government of France to the fact that France was an 'unanointed Republic,' and he declared that if there was a war it would be a war 'of punctilio.' 'It is the true policy of every nation to treat with the existing Government of every other nation with which it has relative interests, without inquiring or regarding how that Government is constituted and by what means those who exercise it came into power.' His advice was that we should at once recognise the French Republic, send an ambassador to Paris to treat with it, and in this way avert if possible the great calamity of war.

This policy was, however, entirely repudiated, not only by the habitual followers of the ministry and by Burke, but also by the Duke of Portland, by Windham, by Sir Gilbert Elliot, by Thomas Grenville, and by the large majority of those who usually followed Fox. The serious amount of dangerous sedition in England; the constant encouragement of that sedition by the French; the necessity of putting an end to the perpetual treasonable correspondence of English societies with the French Convention; the extreme danger of Holland; the gross, wanton, and repeated provocation which had been offered to this old ally of England, appeared to the immense majority of the House of Commons abundantly proved. The present, it was said, was no time for entering into a course of extended internal reforms, which might easily be made the pretext or the instrument of revolution, and it was perfectly certain that no reform short of a total subversion of the mixed Constitution of England would satisfy the zealots of the new French creed. It was wholly untrue that the present attitude of the English Government towards France was due to the fact that she was a republic. The relations of England to Holland, Switzerland, Genoa, and Venice were perfectly amicable. But 'these were not regicidal republics, nor republics of confraternity with the seditious and disaffected in every State.' Was it reasonable, it was asked, to expect the King of England to send an ambassador to France at a time when France had still no settled administration or

Government; when the French Convention had just declared its implacable hatred of all kings and of all monarchical institutions; when it had been receiving and encouraging seditious Englishmen, who had come over to complain of the Constitution of their own country, and to seek for an alliance to subvert it; when a decree had gone forth from Paris which was a general declaration against all existing Governments, and an invitation to universal revolt; when the rulers of France were on the eve of crowning a long series of confiscations and murders by the murder of their inoffensive sovereign? It would be an eternal disgrace to the British Empire, it was said, if England at this time sent an ambassador to Paris, for by doing so she would not only be the first nation in Europe to recognise a Government created by a train of atrocious crimes, but would also be looked upon as giving her countenance to the horrid deed which was manifestly impending. Such a policy would result in 'the complete alienation of those Powers with which England was at present allied,' and by giving the whole weight of the character of England to France at a time when France was endeavouring to arm the subjects of every kingdom against their rulers, it would place all Europe in a deplorable situation. No nation had ever observed neutrality in difficult circumstances more strictly or scrupulously than England. She had given France no provocation whatever. She had again and again declared her resolution to meddle in no way with her internal concerns, and she tolerated in the country an unofficial representative who was perfectly competent to discharge any duties of negotiation that might arise. Nor was there, in truth, any question of difficulty or complexity impending. The whole danger rose from acts of patent and wilful provocation on the part of France; from her pretension to set aside the plainest and most formal treaties on the ground 'that they were extorted by avarice and consented to by despotism;' from her ceaseless efforts to foment rebellion in other countries, and from the ungovernable ambition with which she was disturbing the equilibrium of Europe.

Such was, in a few words, the substance of the rival arguments in the debates in the first weeks of the Session. There can be no question that the Government carried with them the

immense preponderance of opinion, both within the House and beyond its walls. Fox's amendment on the Address was negatived by 290 to 50, and in the opinion of Lord Malmesbury a full half of this small minority consisted of men who, through personal attachment to Fox, voted in opposition to their genuine sentiments.[1] His motion for sending a minister to France was negatived and the Alien Bill was carried without a division. Measures were at the same time carried, prohibiting the circulation in England of French *assignat* bonds, and enabling the King to prohibit the export of naval stores.

While these measures were passing through Parliament several important events were occurring on the Continent. It was already evident that the declarations of the French, that they sought no conquests, and that they would not interfere with the free expression of the will of the inhabitants of the Austrian Netherlands, were mere idle words. Although there was a revolutionary party in Flanders, and especially in the bishopric of Liége, it soon became plain that the general wish of the population of these countries did not extend beyond the re-establishment of their ancient constitution; that they clung tenaciously to their old local privileges, customs, and independence, and that they had not the least wish to see the destruction of their Church or of their nobility. But the French had not been many weeks in the Austrian Netherlands before they proceeded to treat them as a portion of France, to introduce the *assignats*, to confiscate the Church property, to abolish all privileges, and to remould the whole structure of society according to the democratic type. In the famous decree of December 15, the National Convention proclaimed its policy in terms which could not be misunderstood. 'Faithful to the principles of the sovereignty of the people, which will not permit them to acknowledge any of the institutions militating against it,' they ordered that, in every country which was occupied by French arms, the French commander should at once proclaim the sovereignty of the people, the suppression of all existing authorities, the abolition of all existing taxes, of the tithes, of the nobility, and of all privileges. The people were to be convoked to create provisional administrations, from which, how-

[1] Malmesbury's *Diaries*, ii. 476.

ever, all the civil and military agents and officers of the former Government and all members of the lately privileged classes and corporations must be excluded. If, however, as in the case of Flanders, the people of the occupied country preferred their old form of government, the course to be pursued was clearly laid down. 'The French nation will treat as enemies the people who, refusing or renouncing liberty and equality, are desirous of preserving their prince and privileged castes, or of entering into accommodation with them. The nation promises and engages never to lay down its arms until the sovereignty and liberty of the people on whose territory the French armies shall have entered shall be established, and not to consent to any arrangement or treaty with the princes or privileged persons so dispossessed, with whom the Republic is at war.' The Convention added a commentary to this decree, in which its intentions were still more emphatically asserted. 'It is evident,' they said, 'that a people so enamoured of its chains and so obstinately attached to its state of brutishness as to refuse the restoration of its rights is the accomplice not only of its own despots but even of all the crowned usurpers, who divide the domain of the earth and of men. Such a servile people is the declared enemy, not only of the French Republic, but even of all other nations, and therefore the distinction which we have so justly established between Government and people ought not to be observed in its favour.' Such a people must, therefore, be treated 'according to the rigour of war and of conquest.'[1]

The decree excited fierce discontent in the Belgic provinces, but petitions and protests were unavailing, and the Convention sent commissioners, among whom Danton was the most conspicuous, to carry their wishes into execution. While, however, France was thus verifying the predictions of Burke by proclaiming that the war was essentially a war of revolutionary propagandism, and while by this proclamation she stimulated into new energy the many revolutionary clubs and centres that were scattered throughout Europe, a few reverses checked the hitherto unbroken success of her arms. The attempt which had already been made to make a separate peace with Prussia at the expense

[1] Marsh, ch. xii.; *Annual Register*, 1792, part 2, pp. 358-360; Bourgoing, *Hist. Dipl.* i. deuxième partie, pp. 268-272.

of the Emperor was resumed in the early winter of 1792,[1] but it had no result, and a combined army of Prussians and Hessians easily drove the small army of Custine out of Germany. He was compelled to evacuate Frankfort in the beginning of December, and a month later he recrossed the Rhine. An attempt which was made by Beurnonville, at the head of the army of the Moselle, to seize Coblentz and Treves in the middle of December was defeated by the Austrians, and a descent upon Sardinia which followed the expedition to Naples proved a total failure.

The letters which Grenville had addressed on November 13 to the English ambassadors at Vienna and Berlin, inviting confidential communications, were answered with a vagueness which might have been perplexing to the English ministers, if the clue to the riddle had not been furnished by their representatives. It is to be found in the Polish question, which was now absorbing the attention of the German Powers, almost to the exclusion of French affairs. We have already seen the first stages of the plots against Poland which were concocted in the Courts of St. Petersburg and Berlin, and the hopeless impotence to which Poland had been reduced. Her military resources were utterly incapable of meeting the powerful enemies that hemmed her in. Her frontier was almost defenceless. The spirit of her peasantry was broken by repeated Russian invasions and occupations. Her new constitution, though it appeared to the malevolent perspicacity of her neighbours likely to give her order, stability, and prosperity, had not yet time to take any root, and she was completely isolated in Europe. France and Turkey were her two oldest allies; but France had neither the power nor the disposition to interfere for her protection, while Turkey, having but just emerged from an exhausting war, was certain to remain quiescent. But the greatest calamity was the death of the Emperor Leopold. That very able sovereign had regarded the independence and power of Poland as one of the leading elements of European stability, and while he lived he was likely to have the strongest influence in the coalition that had been formed. He died, leaving his empire to an ignorant boy, without a policy or any strength of intellect or will. The policy of Russia

[1] Sybel, ii. 40–42.

towards Poland was one of cynical, undisguised rapacity, and as soon as she had seen the two German Powers engaged in the war with France, she proceeded to put her plans into execution. At the end of May an army of 60,000 Russians crossed the Polish frontier, and in spite of some brave resistance from Kosciusko, they entered Warsaw in the beginning of August.[1]

The course of events depended largely on the King of Prussia. That sovereign, as we have seen, had first induced the Poles to assert their independence of Russia. He had himself urged them to amend their constitution. He had been the first to congratulate them on the constitutional reform of May 1791. He had bound himself before God and man, by two solemn and recent treaties, to respect the integrity of Poland; to defend the integrity of Poland against all enemies; to oppose by force any attempt to interfere with her internal affairs. Yet, as we have also seen, he had resolved as early as March 1792, not only to break his word and to betray his trust, but also to take an active part in the partition of the defenceless country which he had bound himself in honour to protect. By this means the territorial aggrandisement at which he had long been aiming might be attained.

The full extent of the treachery was only gradually disclosed, and the very instructive letters which Eden sent from Berlin enable us to complete a story which is one of the most shameful and most melancholy in the eighteenth century. At the end of May he relates a conversation with Schulenburg which fully confirmed him in his previous opinion that Poland must rely on its own efforts for its safety. 'Your Lordship will observe,' he adds, 'that his sentiments have been uniformly hostile to its prosperity. He scrupled not yesterday to say that Russia was playing the game of this country, and repeated that it must ever be the interest of Prussia to prevent Poland from rising into a great and independent State.' He denied that Prussia was bound to anything more 'than to maintain Poland in the state in which she was before the revolution,' but added that 'the most solemn assurances had been advanced here and to the Prussian minister at Petersburg that nothing further was meant

[1] Hailes to Grenville, May 22, 30, June 27, July 25, August 8, 1792.

by the Empress than to re-establish everything on the same footing as it stood prior to May 3, 1791.'[1]

When the Russians crossed the Polish frontier, the Poles at once appealed to Prussia, and the English minister strongly supported their petition. Eden describes at length the conference between the Polish envoy, Count Potocki, and Schulenburg. The former appealed to 'the article of their treaty which expressly stipulated the assistance to be given, should any Power, under any pretence whatever, interfere in the internal arrangements of the Republic.' Schulenburg denied that the *casus fœderis* had arisen, for the change in the Polish constitution, which had been effected subsequent to the signature of the treaty, and without the privity of the King of Prussia, had essentially changed the political connection of the two countries. 'Count Potocki here observed that if his Prussian Majesty's approbation of the revolution subsequent to its taking place, were alone wanting to justify the claims of his country to his Majesty's protection, he was willing to rest it on that ground, and immediately produced the copy of the despatch dated May 19 of the same year, from his Prussian Majesty himself to Baron Goltz, Chargé d'Affaires at Warsaw. . . . In this despatch his Prussian Majesty extols the revolution as likely to strengthen the alliance between the two countries, approves of the choice made of the Elector of Saxony, and expressly enjoins Baron Goltz to communicate his sentiments to his Polish Majesty. To this paper the Prussian minister could oppose nothing except several censures of the indiscretion of having given a copy of it to the Polish Government. Count Potocki observed very properly, that that appeared to him to be immaterial, since a mere verbal assurance by his Prussian Majesty would have been equally obligatory.'[2]

Eden a few days later sent to England 'a copy of one of the notes presented by the Prussian minister at Warsaw, exhorting the Poles to meliorate their constitution; a copy of the second and sixth articles of their treaty with Prussia, and also a copy of a despatch written May 16, 1791, by his Prussian Majesty to Count Goltz, his Chargé d'Affaires at Warsaw, expressing his full and entire approbation of the revolution effectuated on

[1] Eden to Grenville, May 29, 1792. [2] Ibid. June 12, 1792.

May 3, 1791.' He noticed, however, that on all sides the Poles encountered systematic coldness. Hertzberg said that they deserved their fate, because they would not cede Dantzig and Thorn to Prussia. Potocki, though a man of the first position, was not invited to dine with the King, while an obscure Russian subject obtained this honour, and the Prussian ministers refused an invitation to the house of Potocki. General Mollendorf expressed frankly to Eden his opinion of the ruinous folly of a war with France, which left Russia 'sole arbiter of the fate of Poland.' 'He, however, said,' writes Eden, 'what every Prussian, without any exception of party, will say—that this country can never acquiesce in the establishment of a good government in Poland, since in a very short time it would rise to a very decided superiority.' The pretence, however, was still kept up that the question at issue was not a question of the integrity and independence, but only of the constitution of Poland. 'The Prussian minister repeated that the Empress's views did not extend beyond the total overthrow of the new constitution.' But Eden added significantly, 'I continue of opinion that if proposals for a new partition be made, plausible reasons will be found to remove the scruples of his Prussian Majesty.' [1]

For a short time, Eden himself doubted what policy would be pursued. It was possible, he thought, that Russia might prefer to establish a Russian ascendency in Poland, since the more violent measure of a partition would strengthen Austria and Prussia as well as herself. 'Hopes may be entertained that this act of violence will not be proposed. It would, as I have more than once observed, be readily adopted here, and be approved even by those who in general censure the measures of the Government, Poland having ever been looked upon as fair prey, and the only source of aggrandisement to this country.' [2]

It was sufficiently evident that one of these two fates was almost inevitably impending over Poland. From the young Emperor nothing was to be hoped. 'I am not without suspicion,' Keith wrote early in May, 'that Austria already knows that Prussia will set up no direct opposition to the Empress's views, and . . . that a co-partnership of the three Powers may

[1] Eden to Grenville, June 5, 16, July 7, 10, 17, 1792.
[2] Ibid. July 14, 1792.

renew the former scenes of depredation, and consummate the ruin of the miserable kingdom of Poland.'[1] A week later a new Russian ambassador brought to Vienna the manifesto of the Empress of Russia against the new Polish Constitution; 'I am well informed,' wrote Keith, 'that Austria is dismayed, and at bottom prepared to act a subservient part in that tragedy which Russia no longer hesitates to bring on the stage. I fear that a similar conduct may be expected on the side of Prussia, but not without the purpose of seizing her long-coveted and valuable portion of the plunder. However, Austria has not, to my knowledge, concerted any project of dismemberment; but her principles are not of so rigid a stamp as to hinder her coming in (sneakingly) at the hour of partition for such a share of the garment as may suit her views.'[2]

Information which was not at this time before the English ministers enables us to fill up the picture. Prussia, in entering upon the French war, had from the very beginning asserted her determination to obtain a territorial indemnity,[3] and shortly after the death of Leopold, Schulenburg had sounded the Austrian minister about the possibility of this indemnity consisting of the Polish province of Posen. At the very time when the Prussian statesmen were assuring Eden that there was no question of any violation either of the integrity of Poland or of the pledges of Prussia, she was busily intriguing with Austria and Russia about the plunder of Polish territory. Before Catherine ordered her troops to enter Poland she had been assured from Berlin that she had no opposition to fear from Prussia, provided that country received her share of the spoil,[4] and at the same time Schulenburg endeavoured to negotiate a treaty by which Austria was to obtain her old wish of exchanging the Austrian Netherlands for Bavaria, while Prussia was to obtain the coveted territory in Poland. At Vienna, however, it was desired that Anspach and Baireuth should, in that case, pass to the Emperor, and on this question the negotiations were broken off.[5] The French war accordingly began without anything being settled. The two sovereigns anticipated an easy conquest of Alsace, perhaps of

[1] Keith to Grenville, May 12, 1792.
[2] Ibid. May 19, 1792.
[3] Ibid. i. 452, 453.
[4] Sybel, ii. 143, 144.
[5] Ibid. i. 473–477.

something more, and the question of final indemnities might therefore be deferred.

The invasion, however, proved a total failure. The allied army was rolled back, and it became evident that if Prussia obtained an indemnity it was not likely to be from France. Great preparations were making for a new campaign, but it was soon rumoured that a part at least of the forces that were raised was not intended to act against France. It was not, however, till a few days after Grenville had written his despatch of November 13 that these rumours acquired consistency. On the 20th, Eden sent to England a despatch which must have been peculiarly unwelcome at a time when the probability of a Prussian alliance against France was being painfully forced on the minds of the English ministers. He began by mentioning the fears he had before expressed that, 'notwithstanding the different solemn guarantees of its present territory,' the new armament which Prussia was organising was intended not for the Rhine but for Poland. 'I was contradicted,' he continued, 'in this opinion by the assertions of General Mollendorf and Count de Schulenburg to the Dutch minister, who both so solemnly and strenuously renounced it that I was induced to state it merely as a report.' He has now learnt that the report was perfectly true. The Prussians were to enter Poland ostensibly for the relief of the Russians who were to march against France. General Mollendorf now confesses as much, and that he is himself to command, though he still persists that he had expected to have been sent to the Rhine. 'However iniquitous,' continues Eden, 'the measure may be in itself, and however daring at this awful moment, I will venture to repeat that a new partition will have the general approbation of this country. The unquiet state of Poland . . . will, of course, be alleged as an excuse.'[1]

The English ministers had from the beginning strongly discouraged the plots against Poland, and Eden, in a conference with Schulenburg and another Prussian statesman, begged leave 'formally and ministerially to inquire the real destination of the present armament.' 'I scrupled not,' he says, 'to tell them my suspicions. . . . They both most solemnly protested that no

[1] Eden to Grenville, Nov. 20, 1792.

order relative to those troops had been sent to the Cabinet; that that to the War Office directed their march to the Rhine, and that if they had any other destination it was unknown to them.' Eden insisted that the new armament was to be sent to Poland, and expressed his most earnest hope that if it were not too late, this order might even now be cancelled, 'as a measure which furnishes such strong grounds of apprehension for the fate of Poland would naturally alarm his Majesty's ministers, might in its consequences accelerate the general dissolution which at present threatens all governments on the continent of Europe, and would certainly increase the popular cry of animosity against monarchy.' 'To be mistaken on the present occasion,' he continued, 'would give me infinite pleasure, but both the Dutch minister and myself possess such unquestionable proofs of the fact as force my assent to it, however unwilling I may be to believe the Prussian ministers guilty of so gross a prevarication.'[1]

The term 'prevarication' was delicately chosen. Schulenburg, as we have seen, had borne a leading part in the plot, and there can be no doubt that he was perfectly aware of what was intended. Two or three days later the English ambassador was informed by the Prussian ministers that, as the King had made no communication to his Cabinet about the destination of his armament, they could not 'ministerially authorise him' to contradict the reported invasion of Poland,[2] and a letter of Eden written on the first day of 1793 tells the sequel of the story. General Mollendorf, he says, is on the eve of starting at the head of his army for the Polish frontier. 'This business is no longer a mystery here, and it is publicly said that the four Bailiwicks of which he is to take possession in Great Poland were the promised price of his Prussian Majesty's interference in the affairs of France, and that he has now exacted the discharge of the promise, with threats of otherwise making a separate peace with France. Russia, it is added, consents with reluctance, induced principally by fear of the Turks. . . . Having more than once represented to the Prussian ministers the extreme injustice of this measure and even its impolicy at this awful

[1] Eden to Grenville, Nov. 23, 1792. [2] Ibid. Nov. 27, 1792.

crisis, and having been answered only by miserable elusions, it appears unnecessary to say anything further on the subject.'[1]

Few things could have been more embarrassing to the English Government than these proceedings. The conduct of the French had brought them to the very brink of war. They were in daily expectation of hearing that a French army had crossed the Dutch frontier, and everything appeared to announce a struggle of the most formidable character. If it took place it was inevitable that England should be closely leagued with those continental Powers from whose French policy she had hitherto held steadily aloof. It was now discovered that these Powers were at this very time engaged in a scheme of plunder at least as nefarious as any that could be attributed to the French democracy. Poland lay almost wholly beyond the sphere of English interests and influence, and England could probably under no circumstances have prevented the partition; but it was peculiarly unfortunate that she should be obliged to begin her great struggle, by entering into a close alliance with the spoliators. A true statesman must have clearly seen that the contest which was impending was one in which moral influences must bear an unusual prominence. To the wild democratic enthusiasms, to the millennial dreams of a regenerated world which France could evoke, it was necessary to oppose the most powerful counteracting moral principles of the old world—the love of country and creed; the attachments that gather round property and traditions and institutions; the instinct of reverence; the sense of honour, justice, and duty. But what moral dignity, what enthusiasm, what real popularity could attach to a coalition in which the three plunderers of Poland occupied a prominent place? If, indeed, the picture of the morals of democracy which is furnished by the accumulated horrors of the French Revolution should ever induce men to think too favourably of the morals of despotism, the story of the partition of Poland is well fitted to correct the error.

The Polish machinations explain the tardiness of the German Powers in responding to the English overtures of November 13. The time at last came when a full explanation had to be made,

[1] Eden to Grenville, Jan. 1, 1793. Mollendorf crossed the Polish frontier on the 14th. Sybel, ii. 175.

and Lord Grenville himself may relate what occurred. On January 12 Count Stadion and Baron Jacobi, the Imperial and Prussian representatives, came to him and delivered in writing a vague and formal reply to the English note. Having done this, continues Lord Grenville, they 'informed me that they had a further communication to make, but that they had agreed to do it verbally only, and in such a manner that my reply to it (if I made any) might not form part of the official answer to be given to their written communications. They then explained that they had received information from their respective Courts that, with a view to indemnifying them for the expenses of the war, a project had been brought forward by which Prussia was to obtain an arrondissement on the side of Poland, and in return was to withdraw any opposition to the exchange formerly proposed of the Low Countries and Bavaria. . . . I told them that I was glad they had mentioned this project in the form they had chosen, that I was much better satisfied not to be obliged to enter into any formal or official discussion on the subject of Poland, but that I thought it due to the open communication which I wished to see established between our respective Courts not to omit saying at once and distinctly that the King would never be a party to any concert or plan, one part of which was the gaining a compensation for the expenses of the war from a neutral and unoffending nation; that the King was bound by no engagement of any sort with Poland, but that neither would his Majesty's sentiments suffer him to participate in measures directed to such an object, nor could he hope for the concurrence and support of his people in such a system.' If France persisted in a war of mere aggrandisement, her opponents might justly expect some compensation; but 'this compensation, however arranged, could be looked for only from conquests made upon France, not from the invasion of the territory of another country.'[1]

Such a protest was useful in defining the position of the English Government, but it could have no influence on the course of events. Eden immediately after wrote, stating the King of Prussia's determination to act no longer as a principal in the war if the indemnification in Poland were refused him. Eden

[1] Grenville to Eden, Jan. 12, 1793.

asked the Prussian minister 'if Russia had preferred any claims. He said, as yet nothing had been settled, but that Russia also had views of aggrandisement on the side of Poland. Austria too must look there for indemnification, since it is not likely that the projected exchange can be carried into execution.'[1]

We must now return to the negotiations that were still carried on between England and France. Before the end of November the proceedings of the French both at Paris and in Belgium had made war almost inevitable, and Chauvelin, who believed that England was on the verge of revolution, who was in constant communication with disaffected Englishmen, and who had for some time interpreted the pacific language and conduct of Pitt as a sign of timidity, was the last man to avert it. His first object was to force on an immediate recognition of the Republic, and he is stated on good authority to have openly declared that his dearest wish, if he were not recognised at St. James's, was to leave the country with a declaration of war.[2] On November 29, he had an interview with Grenville in which he held language of the haughtiest kind. He told him that the triumphant march of Dumouriez upon Brussels had wholly changed the situation, and that the language a French minister might have held ten days before was inapplicable now. He evidently believed that he was the master of the situation, and that the English ministers would soon be at his feet. They were quite ready, he told Lebrun, to recognise the French Republic, and the nearer the war drew, the more anxious they were to find pretexts for avoiding it, if France would give them such.[3]

Grenville had indeed assured Chauvelin that 'outward forms would be no hindrance to his Britannic Majesty, whenever the question related to explanations which might be satisfactory and advantageous to both parties,' and Pitt declared that 'it was his desire to avoid a war and to receive a proof of the same

[1] Eden to Grenville, Jan. 19, 1793.

[2] Miles, *Authentic Correspondence with Lebrun*, p. 84.

[3] Chauvelin to Lebrun, Nov. 29, 1792. Chauvelin gives a curious account of how, on entering Grenville's room, he found a small chair apparently intended for him to sit on. 'J'ai dérangé cette chaise qui m'a paru une petite déchéance intentionnelle, et me suis emparé d'un grand fauteuil. Ce mouvement très marqué a frappé Lord Grenville, qui m'a dit avec embarras: "Vous n'avez pas voulu être plus près du feu. Il fait pourtant grand froid aujourd'hui."'

sentiments from the French ministry.'[1] It is abundantly evident, however, from Lebrun's confidential correspondence with Chauvelin that there was no real prospect of England obtaining on any point the satisfaction she desired. France, he wrote, intended to examine the treaties forbidding the opening of the Scheldt according to 'natural principles,' and not according to the rules of ancient diplomacy. The clauses in the Treaty of Utrecht relating to it were null because they were contrary to justice and reason.[2] On the subject of the hostile intentions of France towards Holland, towards the House of Orange, and towards that constitution which England had guaranteed, Chauvelin was directed for the present to avoid a categorical explanation. The military situation was not yet such as to justify it. If, however, conversation arose on the subject he was instructed to say that France would never interfere with the incontestable right of every country to give itself what government it pleased, but if any other Power, on the ground of 'a pretended internal guarantee,' attempted to prevent the Dutch from exercising this right of changing their government, the 'generosity of the French Republic would at once call her to their assistance.' Such a guarantee, he was to add, as that signed by England and Prussia was a plain violation of the rights of nations; it was radically null, and any attempt to enforce it would immediately produce a French intervention.[3] At the very time when Chauvelin was instructed to assure Grenville that France had no hostile intentions towards Holland, he was informed by Maret that Dumouriez intended to attack Maestricht;[4] and although the intention was soon abandoned, it was evident that if the French party in Holland succeeded in making an insurrection, the army on the frontier would assist them.

The complaints of the political propagandism of the French and of their meddling with the internal constitutions of other countries were abundantly justified. Not only the Paris Jacobins, but also the representative of the French Republic in England, corresponded actively with the disaffected clubs, and

[1] Marsh's *History of the Politics of Great Britain and France*, ii. 12, 13.

[2] Lebrun to Chauvelin, Nov. 30, 1792 (French Foreign Office).

[3] Ibid. Dec. 5, 1792.

[4] Chauvelin to Lebrun, Nov. 14, 1792.

French agents were already intriguing with United Irishmen in order to produce an insurrection in Ireland.[1]

It is somewhat difficult to ascertain the real intentions of Lebrun. They probably fluctuated according to the violence of that Parisian public opinion which he was bound on pain of death most absolutely to obey; according to the sentiments of his colleagues in the Executive Council, and also according to his belief in the imminence of a revolution in England, and in the supposed timidity of the English Government. The many different agents at this time employed by the French Government pursued different lines of action, and, while some were actively fomenting revolution, an attempt was made at negotiation in the beginning of December, which gave real promise of peace.

Maret, who was afterwards better known as the Duke of Bassano, and who had lately been employed with Dumouriez in Belgium, was sent over to England in November 1792.[2] He came ostensibly about some private affairs of the Duke of Orleans, but he was in reality a political agent, in the confidence of Lebrun, and acting in close combination with Noel. He obtained an introduction to William Smith, a member of Parliament whose name frequently occurs in the debates of the time as a speaker in favour of France, and who was taking much interest in the attempts to avert war, and he entered into discussion with Smith on the differences between the two countries. Smith was not a supporter of the Government; but he was so much impressed by the ability and conciliatory tone of Maret, that he was very anxious that he should see Pitt. Pitt readily consented, and, on December 2, Maret had a long interview which he afterwards reported to Lebrun. He found Pitt extremely courteous and conciliatory, and came away strongly impressed with his earnest and evident desire for peace. He believed it to be stronger and more genuine than that of the leaders of the Opposition, but he was also of opinion that the King and the majority of the ministers now leaned to war. Pitt declared himself absolutely and

[1] The relations of France with Ireland will be examined in a later chapter. See an unsigned report on Irish affairs, dated Dec. 1, and a letter from Coquebert to Lebrun, Dec. 18, 1792, in the French Foreign Office.

[2] On the mission of Maret see the valuable work of Baron Ernouf, *Maret, Duc de Bassano.*

irrevocably decided not to suffer any aggression upon Holland, and to execute rigorously the treaties of England with her allies. The conversation passed to the decree of November 19, and Maret maintained that, notwithstanding the general expressions employed in it, it was intended only to apply to countries with which France was actually at war. Pitt answered that 'if an interpretation of that kind were possible, its effects would be excellent,' and Maret added that the decree had been carried by a surprise and that the Executive Council did not really approve of it. On the subject of the navigation of the Scheldt, Maret avoided discussion, and Pitt, seeing his desire, did not press him. Speaking of the fate of the French royal family, he expressed some hope that the majority of voters would not be in favour of death, but he said that the state of feeling in France was now such that any foreign interference would defeat its own end, as completely as the manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick had done. He touched also on a recognition of the Republic. Pitt told him that this was not at present possible; he showed himself very unfavourable to Chauvelin, but declared that if the French would send a confidential secret agent who could be trusted, he would be cordially welcomed. Pitt dwelt earnestly on his anxiety to avoid a war, which must be disastrous to both countries, and on the great danger of the present state of things which inflamed suspicions and distrust on both sides, and he finally suggested that Maret should send to Paris asking for instructions and powers. He begged him very earnestly to do so without delay, as every day was precious.[1]

Maret did as he was asked. It was his evident impression that, provided the security of Holland were fully established, and the decree of November 19 explained in the sense which he had indicated, every other point of difference might be arranged, and that the recognition of the Republic was only deferred. Chauvelin, however, complained bitterly of the confidence that had been given to Maret as a slur upon himself. He wrote to the Executive Council asking to be recalled, if

[1] The account of this interview as published by the French Government will be found in a collection of *State Papers relating to the War against France* (London, 1794), i. 220-223, but some important passages, as well as a later note of Maret, are suppressed, and will be found in Baron Ernouf's work, which gives the fullest account of this episode.

another agent was employed, and he assured them that the English ministers were undoubtedly hostile, but that he was seeking in other quarters more worthy allies. Lebrun would probably have given Maret the powers he asked for, and have negotiated on friendly terms with Pitt, but the majority of the Executive Council preferred a less conciliatory course. On December 9 the French ministers wrote declining the proposal for a secret negotiation and directing that all communications with the English Government must be made through Chauvelin, 'the known and avowed representative of the Republic.' On the 14th, Maret was obliged to communicate this decision to Pitt, and he almost immediately after left England.[1]

The hopes of peace had now almost gone, and the decree of December 15 greatly increased the imminence of the danger. It was now evident that, in spite of their previous assurances, the French Government had fully resolved to incorporate the Belgic provinces, to break up the whole structure of their ancient society, to destroy all their national institutions in order to assimilate them absolutely and without delay to the new French democracy. The decree opening the Scheldt already implied that the French considered themselves the sovereigns of these provinces, but the course they were now pursuing placed their intention beyond reasonable doubt. It was an intention which no minister, who had not wholly abandoned the traditions of English policy, could regard without the gravest alarm.

It was plain that English public opinion now measured the magnitude of the danger, and was rapidly preparing for the struggle. Chauvelin wrote, indeed, that Fox and Sheridan were fully resolved to oppose the war; that Fox's speech on the subject on December 13 was so noble, that the French Convention would have at once ordered it to be printed; that he himself was indefatigable in urging 'the Friends of Liberty' to come forward; that he had established relations with some rich merchants in the City, and that 'under his auspices' numerous addresses to the Convention repudiating the idea of war were being signed in England. But the illusion that the nation was with him was now fast ebbing away. The militia were called out,

[1] Ernouf, pp. 98–104.

and public opinion evidently supported the measure. The Government, he wrote, is determined to adopt a system of violence and rigour. 'The infamous Burke' has been consulted by the Privy Council. The English people are evidently not ripe for revolution. Their apathy and blindness to French principles is deplorable. They have so changed within a month that they are scarcely recognisable. In that time, 'merely through fear of convulsions dangerous to property, they have passed from admiration of us to hatred, and from the enthusiasm of liberty to the delirium of servitude.' The infinitesimal minority that followed Fox in Parliament reflected but too truly his weakness in the country. In the theatres the National Anthem was enthusiastically sung, and deputations of merchants to assure the Government of their support were hastening to the Treasury. Pitt, said Chauvelin, 'seems to have killed public opinion in England,' but he added in another letter these memorable words, 'The King of England and all his council, with the exception of Pitt, do not cease to desire this war.'[1]

Fox avowed in Parliament his belief that the course he was pursuing would be ruinous to his popularity, but still Chauvelin deplored the weakness and the timidity of the Opposition. On December 7, Sheridan, on the part of Fox and of his friends, had a long interview with Chauvelin, and used some language which was very remarkable. He expressed great indignation at the decree of December 19, offering French assistance to all revolted subjects. Nothing, he truly said, in the language of this decree, restricted it even to cases where a clear majority of a nation were in insurrection, and it seemed to pledge the French to support by an invasion the rebellion of a few thousand men in Ireland. The Opposition, Sheridan said, desired a thorough but constitutional reform, and they desired peace with France, unless she made an aggression on Holland. They would strenuously oppose war on account of the opening of the Scheldt, and if it was declared on that ground they would represent it as a device for turning aside all reform. They would, perhaps, even go so far as to propose the impeachment of Pitt; but they warned the French envoy, that in common with nine-

[1] Chauvelin to Lebrun, Dec. 3, 7, 8, 14, 18, 1792.

tenths of the people of the three kingdoms, they would support the ministers in repelling any attempt of the French Government to intermeddle with English internal affairs. England had given France the example of a Revolution; she was quite capable of following the example of France in her own manner and with her own forces.[1]

On the side of Holland, the prospect at this time had slightly improved. A French army entered Prussian Guelderland and encamped on the border of the Dutch territory, but the advance of the Prussians produced a change of plan. Fearing to be shut up between the floods of the Meuse and the Prussians, the French repassed the Meuse without penetrating to Cleves, and returned to Ruremonde, taking with them hostages for large sums of money to be raised in the lately occupied territory. From this fact as well as from some other indications, Auckland inferred that the project of an invasion of Holland was, for the present, laid aside, and the number of desertions from the French, and the difficulties they found in obtaining subsistence, made him hope that the worst was over. At the same time, he wrote, 'these provinces have every reason to continue vigilant, and to pursue their preparations with the utmost energy. Quarters are preparing near Anvers for 17,000 French troops, and the Légion Batave is to be cantoned at this side of Anvers, probably for the purpose of correspondence with the patriots and to draw recruits out of the Republic. . . . The internal tranquillity is, for the present, complete, but it is certain that there are many ill-disposed individuals in the principal towns.' 'I cannot doubt that it is the intention and plan of the French leaders to commence hostilities against this Republic on the first practicable occasion.' The Prince of Orange urgently asked for English vessels, stating that he had certain knowledge of a French plan to attack Holland on three sides—by Nimeguen, by Breda, and by Friesland.[2]

In Paris, the most violent and most reckless section of the Jacobins had now completely triumphed. The trial of the

[1] Chauvelin to Lebrun, Dec. 7, 1792. See too Ernouf, *Maret, Duc de Bassano*, pp. 100, 101. Fox used very similar language in Parliament. See Rose's *Diary*, i. 144.

[2] Auckland to Grenville, Dec. 25, 26, 1792.

King had begun, and it was openly represented as the first act of a tragedy, which was only to end with the destruction of monarchy in Europe. 'The impulse is given to the whole world,' said Grégoire in the Assembly. 'The nations are throwing themselves in the path of liberty. The volcano is about to break forth, which will transform the globe.'[1] Passions were raised to fever-heat, and the car of the Revolution flew on with a maddening speed, crushing every obstacle in its path. In the exultation and arrogance of the moment, temporising was hardly possible. The English Government, it was said, was arming. The English Court hated the Revolution. The English privileged orders were denouncing the September massacres. But behind them there was an English nation only waiting the signal for deliverance, and the peaceful language of Pitt to Maret was interpreted in Paris as a sign of fear. On December 24, one of the more pacific members of the Convention called attention to the great uneasiness which had been excited in England by the decree of November 19, offering French assistance to all subjects revolting against their tyrants; and in order to dispel that uneasiness he moved the addition of a clause restricting the decree to countries with which France was actually at war, but the motion was at once rejected without discussion.[2] Appeals to the English people against the English Government became habitual in the tribune; the language of Lebrun took a tone of unmistakable menace,[3] and on December 27, Chauvelin as 'Minister Plenipotentiary of France,' and in obedience to the instructions of the Executive Council of the French Republic, presented to Lord Grenville a long and peremptory note charging the British ministry with having shown in their public conduct a manifest ill-will towards France, and demanding in writing a speedy and definite reply to the question whether France was to consider England a neutral or a hostile country. The note proceeded to examine the grievances alleged in England against France. The decree of November 19 was not meant to favour insurrections or disturb any neutral or friendly Power. It applied only to nations which had

[1] Sybel, ii. 64.

[2] Marsh's *Hist. of Politics*, i. 340, 341.

[3] Ibid. pp. 333–338; Bourgoing deuxième partie, i. 315, 316.

already acquired their liberty by conquest, and demanded the fraternity and assistance of France, by the solemn and unequivocal expression of the general will. The French minister was authorised to declare that France would not attack Holland so long as that Power preserved an exact neutrality. The opening of the Scheldt was irrevocably decided 'by reason and justice.' If the English Government made use of it as a cause for war, it would be only 'the vainest of all pretences to colour an unjust aggression long ago determined upon.' It would be a war 'of the administration alone against the French Republic,' and France would appeal to the English nation against its Government.[1]

The note was couched in a haughty and imperious strain, manifestly intended either to provoke or to intimidate. Grenville clearly saw that it was meant to accelerate a rupture.[2] The opening of the Scheldt was the violation of a distinct treaty based on grounds which would justify the abrogation of any treaty, and it acquired a peculiar danger from the great maritime power and preparations of France, and from the attitude which France was assuming both towards Belgium and towards Holland; while the active correspondence of French agents with the disaffected, both in Great Britain, in Ireland, and in Holland; the public reception and encouragement by the Convention of Englishmen who were avowedly seeking to overturn the Constitution of their country; the emphatic refusal of the Convention to exempt England from the terms of the decree of November 19, and the intercepted letters of Tainville and De Maulde, deprived the more pacific portions of the note of all credit. Just at this time the Russian ambassador came to Grenville and proposed a concert with his Court on the subject of French affairs. Grenville expressed the willingness of the King to enter into such a concert, 'confining it to the object of opposing a barrier to the danger that threatens the tranquillity of all other countries and the political interests of Europe from the intrigues and ambitious views pursued by France, without directing his views to any interference in the interior government of that country.' Much doubt, Grenville explained to Auckland, was felt by the King's ministers about the real

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxx. 250-253. [2] Grenville to Auckland, Dec. 28, 1792.

motives of the Empress, but it seemed to them that a qualified acceptance of the proposal was the best means of ascertaining them. 'If either the original intention, or the effect of this step on our part, induced the Empress to take an active share in the war which seems so little likely to be avoided, a great advantage will be derived from it to the common cause. If she withdraws the sort of overture she has made, no inconvenience can result from the measure taken by the King, at all to be put in comparison with the benefit of success.' It was probable, Grenville thought, that before any answer could arrive from St. Petersburg the matter would have come to a crisis.[1]

On the 31st, Grenville sent his answer to Chauvelin. He began by reminding him that he had never been recognised in England in any other public character than as accredited by the French King, and that, since August 10, his Majesty had suspended all official intercourse with France. Chauvelin was therefore peremptorily informed that he could not be admitted to treat with the King's ministers in the character he had assumed. Since, however, he had entered, though in a form which was neither regular nor official, into explanations of some of the circumstances that had caused strong uneasiness in England, the English ministers would not refuse to state their views concerning them. The first was the decree of November 19. In this decree England 'saw the formal declaration of a design to extend universally the new principles of government adopted in France, and to encourage disorder and

[1] Grenville to Auckland, Dec. 28, 29, 1792. See too the account of this transaction sent by Grenville to the English ambassador at St. Petersburg. Count Woronzow urged as a reason for again making a proposal of concert which had previously been rejected, that the Empress felt that the question was no longer what should be the interior government of France, but whether 'that Power should be permitted to extend its conquests over all the countries in its neighbourhood, carrying with it principles subversive to all government and established order; that the views of aggrandisement entertained by France were sufficiently manifest from what had happened both in Savoy and in the Netherlands, and that the means which she employed for that purpose were more dangerous to the tranquillity and security of other Powers even than the success of her arms.' Grenville observed to Whitworth that there was a great distinction between 'an interference for the purpose of establishing any form of government in France, and a concert between other Governments to provide for their own security at a time when their political interests are endangered both by the intrigues of France in the interior of other countries and her views of conquest and aggrandisement.' Grenville to Whitworth, Dec. 29, 1792.

revolt in all countries, even in those which are neutral. . . . The application of these principles to the King's dominions has been shown unequivocally by the public reception given to the promoters of sedition in this country, and by the speeches made to them precisely at the time of this decree and since on several different occasions.' The ministers would have gladly accepted any satisfactory explanation of this decree, but they could find neither satisfaction nor security 'in the terms of an explanation which still declares to the promoters of sedition in every country what are the cases in which they may count beforehand on the support and succour of France, and which reserves to that country the right of mixing herself in our internal affairs whenever she shall judge it proper, and on principles incompatible with the political institutions of all the countries of Europe.' Such a declaration was plainly calculated to encourage disorder and revolt in every country; it was directly opposed to the respect which is due to all independent nations; and it was in glaring contrast to the conduct of the King of England, who had scrupulously abstained from all interference in the internal affairs of France.

The assurance that France had no intention of attacking Holland as long as that Power observed an exact neutrality, was drawn up, the note observed, in nearly the same terms as that which was given last June.[1] But since that assurance, a French captain had violated both the territory and neutrality of Holland by sailing up the Scheldt in defiance of the prohibition of the Dutch Government, to attack the citadel of Antwerp, and the French Convention had ventured to 'annul the rights of the Republic, exercised within the limits of its own territory and enjoyed by virtue of the same treaties by which her independence is secured.' Nay, more, Chauvelin, in this very letter of explanation, emphatically asserted the right of the Convention to throw open the navigation of the Scheldt. France could have no right to annul the stipulations relating to that river unless she had also a right to set aside all treaties. She could have 'no pretence to interfere in the question of opening the Scheldt unless she were the sovereign of the Low Countries or had the right to dictate laws to all Europe.' To such pre-

[1] On the terms of this declaration see Marsh, ii. 71.

tensions the reply to the English Government was lofty and unequivocal. 'England never will consent that France should arrogate the power of annulling, at her pleasure, and under the pretence of a pretended natural right, of which she makes herself the only judge, the political system of Europe, established by solemn treaties and guaranteed by the consent of all the Powers. This Government, adhering to the maxims which it has followed for more than a century, will also never see with indifference that France shall make herself either directly or indirectly sovereign of the Low Countries, or general arbitress of the rights and liberties of Europe. If France is really desirous of maintaining friendship and peace with England, she must show herself disposed to renounce her views of aggression and aggrandisement, and to confine herself within her own territory without insulting other Governments, without disturbing their tranquillity, without violating their rights.' 'His Majesty has always been desirous of peace. He desires it still,' but it must be a peace 'consistent with the interests and dignity of his own dominions, and with the general security of Europe.'[1]

The hand of Pitt may be plainly traced in this memorable document. It proved decisively to France and to Europe that it was vain to attempt to intimidate his Government, and the part which related to the Austrian Netherlands cleared up a point which had hitherto been somewhat ambiguous. It is curious to compare the grave and measured terms of the note of Grenville with another ministerial utterance, which was penned on the very same day. On December 31, Monge, the French Minister for the Navy, sent a circular letter to the seaport towns of France containing the following passage: 'The King [of England] and his Parliament wish to make war with us. But will the English Republicans suffer it? Those free men already show their discontent and their abhorrence of bearing arms against their French brethren. We shall fly to their assistance. We shall make a descent on that isle; we shall hurl thither 50,000 caps of liberty; we shall plant the sacred tree and stretch out our arms to our brother republicans. The tyranny of their Government will soon be destroyed.'[2]

It was plain that the breach was very near. The French

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxx. 253-256. [2] Marsh, i. 341-344.

were levying enormous contributions in the towns of Brabant, imprisoning burgomasters who were not in accordance with their views, plundering the churches and monasteries, reorganising all branches of the administration with an impetuous haste, endeavouring by every means to flatter and secure the populace, while they crushed the clergy and the rich. They encountered, however, in many quarters considerable resistance. In Ostend especially, there was a fierce riot, and great crowds paraded the streets demanding the old Belgic constitution and the restoration of the priests. The Batavian Legion of disaffected Dutchmen in the French service now numbered at least three thousand men, and they issued a violent manifesto in French and Dutch, which was industriously disseminated by the 'patriots' in Holland.[1]

The Dutch Government was acting in perfect harmony with that of England, but Auckland regarded the prospect with a despondency which the event too fully justified. The objects of governments are not only various, but in some measure incompatible, and the Dutch constitution, like the old constitution of Poland, being mainly constructed with the object of opposing obstacles to the encroachments of the central power, had left the country wholly incapable of prompt and energetic action in times of public danger. No augmentation of the military or naval forces, no serious measure of defence, could be effected without the separate assent of all the provinces, and the forms that were required by law were so numerous and so cumbrous that it was probably chiefly its more favourable geographical position that saved the United Provinces from the fate of Poland. It was intended to add 14,000 men to the Dutch army, and there was a question of subsidising foreign troops, but in the meantime the Dutch army, though 'well trained, well appointed, and in general well disposed,' was far below the necessities of the time, utterly unpractised in war, and scattered in seventeen or eighteen feeble garrisons. Nor was the spirit of the people what it had been. The Stadholder and the ministers were most anxious to do their best; but Auckland warned his Government that Holland would make little efficient exertion

[1] See several letters of information inclosed by Auckland to Grenville, Jan. 1793, also *Mémoires de Dumouriez*, liv. vii.

unless there was a great pressure of danger. 'Nor,' he said, 'in the estimate of that danger will she be guided by any long-sighted views. It must be a danger apparent to all eyes and palpable at the moment. This arises partly from the mixture of the mercantile spirit with political deliberations, but principally from the constitution of the provinces which call themselves a Union, with every defect that can contribute on questions of general moment to contrariety of decision and to procrastination of execution.' [1]

A French loyalist named De Curt, who had been a member of the first National Assembly and who had afterwards served as an emigrant under the French Princes, had about this time some remarkable confidential conversations with Lord Hawkesbury. De Curt was a native of Guadaloupe, and he held a mission from its assembly. He seems to have been a man of high character and liberal views, sincerely attached to the House of Bourbon, and so disgusted with the course events had taken in France that he was anxious to be naturalised as an Englishman. The French West Indian Islands he represented as vehemently loyalist. The Assemblies of Guadaloupe and Martinique had driven from those islands all persons suspected of democratic principles, as well as notorious bad characters who might be made use of in revolution, and these men had chiefly taken shelter in the British island of Dominica, where, if they were suffered to remain, they were likely to become a source of much trouble. He stated that the French West Indian Islands would never submit voluntarily to the Republican Government; but that their successful resistance depended largely on the chances of assistance from England. Lord Hawkesbury said that he could only speak to him unofficially and as a private individual, but in this capacity he spoke with great freedom. 'I told him,' he says, 'that we certainly wished to continue at peace with France . . . but that many events had lately happened which afforded great probability that Great Britain and Holland would be forced to take a part in the war; that the moment of decision, however, was not yet arrived,' and that the ministers were anxiously awaiting the development of the French policy about Holland. De Curt was strongly of opinion that the

[1] Auckland to Grenville, Jan. 2, 11, 1793.

French ministers, even if they wished it, would not dare to recede, and he declared his determination to send at once a messenger to Guadaloupe to advise the colony to resist. Hawkesbury begged that it should be clearly understood that such a course was not taken in consequence of any engagement with England. De Curt replied that he would advise it on his own responsibility 'as the most prudent which they could pursue for their own interests in the present state of affairs between France on the one hand and Great Britain and Holland on the other. He then told me,' continues Hawkesbury, 'that his connections were solely with Guadaloupe, but that Martinique would certainly pursue the same line of conduct, that the inhabitants of Martinique had also an agent here, whom he named, with whom he would consult, who would give, he was sure, the people of Martinique the same advice. . . . He added that the agent of St. Lucia would necessarily follow the fate of Martinique, and that in the end St. Domingo would adopt the same conduct.' Guadaloupe in his opinion could, without assistance, resist for at least two months any force the Convention could send against it, and if England and Holland engaged in the war, the French would have no port except the Danish island of Ste. Croix to resort to. 'In his opinion the war must be ended in one campaign, from the ruin of French commerce, the destruction of the French fleets, and the surrender of the French islands to Great Britain.' He said with much emotion that the authority of the House of Bourbon was at an end; that the anarchy in France was likely to last for at least thirty years, and that it was his wish and his duty to follow the fate of his real country, the West Indian Islands. In a subsequent interview he described a plan for the invasion of England from Cherbourg by boats made of copper or tin, which had been proposed by an engineer named Gautier to the Maritime Committee of the National Assembly at a time when De Curt was a member of that body, and which had been approved of in case a rupture should take place. A letter nearly at the same time came from the Marquis de Bouillé representing that Martinique and Guadaloupe were in revolt against the Convention, and imploring that England would assist them, if possible openly, if not clandestinely.[1]

[1] *Minutes* of a conference between Lord Hawkesbury and M. de Curt,

On January 7 Chauvelin sent a new note to Grenville, again asserting his character of minister plenipotentiary of the French Republic, and complaining in very angry terms of the Alien Act as an infraction of that portion of the Treaty of Commerce which secured to the subjects and inhabitants of each of the two countries full liberty of dwelling in the dominions of the other, travelling through them when they please and coming and going freely 'without licence or passport, general or special.' He described the Treaty of Commerce as a treaty to which England owed a great part of her actual prosperity, but which was 'burdensome to France,' and had been 'wrested by address and ability from the unskilfulness and from the corruption of the agents of a Government' which France had destroyed. He now demanded from Lord Grenville a 'speedy, clear, and categorical answer' to his question whether the French were included under the general denomination of 'foreigners' in the Bill. Grenville simply returned the note with a statement that Chauvelin had assumed a diplomatic character which was inadmissible. In another letter Chauvelin protested against the proclamation prohibiting the export of grain and flour from England.[1]

The complaint relating to the Alien Act might be easily answered. The restriction imposed on foreigners travelling in England was a matter of internal police rendered necessary by a great and pressing danger; the measure included a special clause in favour of those who could 'prove that they came to England for affairs of commerce,' and it is a curious fact that the French themselves only seven months before had imposed still more severe restrictions upon foreigners in France. Neither the English nor any other ambassador had complained of the decree of May 1792, under which no foreigner was suffered to travel in France on pain of arrest without a passport describing accurately his person or his route.[2]

A much more important document was a note drawn up by

Dec. 5, 18. Note of the Marquis de Bouillé, Dec. 30, 1792 (French Correspondence at the Record Office).

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxx. 256–262. On the 11th Chauvelin announced that the French considered the Treaty of Commerce annulled on account of its infraction by the English.

[2] See Marsh's *Hist. of Politics*, i. 277–285; Sybel, *Hist. de l'Europe*, ii. 101.

Lebrun, and presented by Chauvelin on January 13. It is an elaborate answer to the letter of Lord Grenville which has been already quoted, and it was drawn up in moderate, plausible, and dignified language very unlike some of the late correspondence. Grenville in communicating it to Auckland said that it was evident from it that the tone of the Executive Council was much lowered; though it was impossible to say whether the present rulers of France would comply with the demands which alone could insure permanent tranquillity to England and Holland.[1] Lebrun began by emphatically declaring the sincere desire of the Executive Council and of the French nation to maintain friendly relations with England, and the importance of having a competent and accredited representative to explain the differences between the two countries. In order that this should be accomplished the Executive Council of the French Republic sent formal letters of credence to Chauvelin, which would enable him to treat with all the severity of diplomatic forms. He then proceeded to explain that the decree of November 19 was not intended, as the English minister alleged, to encourage the seditious, for it could have no application except in the single case in which the general will of a nation, clearly and unequivocally expressed, should call the French nation to its assistance and fraternity. In the opinion of the Executive Council, the decree might perhaps have been dispensed with, but with the interpretation now given to it, it ought not to excite uneasiness in any nation.

On the subject of Holland the French minister said Grenville had raised no definite point except the opening of the Scheldt. This measure, he contended, was of no consequence to England, of very little consequence to Holland, but of vital importance to Belgium, and especially to the prosperity of Antwerp. It was in order to restore to the Belgians the enjoyment of a precious right, and not in order to offend any other Power, that France had thrown open the navigation. The restriction closing it had been made without the participation of the inhabitants of these provinces. The Emperor, in order to secure his despotic power over them, had without scruple sacrificed their most inviolable rights. France in a legitimate war

[1] Grenville to Auckland, Jan. 13, 1793.

had expelled the Austrians from the Low Countries, called back its people to freedom, and invited them to re-enter into all the rights which the House of Austria had taken away from them. 'If the rights of nature and those of nations are consulted, not France alone but all the nations of Europe are authorised to do it.'

A passage follows which if it could have been fully believed might have done much to appease the quarrel. 'The French Republic does not intend to erect itself into a universal arbitrator of the treaties which bind nations. She will know how to respect other Governments as she will take care to make her own respected. She has renounced, and again renounces, every conquest; and her occupation of the Low Countries will only continue during the war, and the time which may be necessary to the Belgians to insure and consolidate their liberty; after which let them be independent and happy. France will find her recompense in their felicity.'

If England and Holland continue to attach any importance to the navigation of the Scheldt, they may negotiate on the subject directly with Belgium. 'If the Belgians through any motive consent to deprive themselves of the navigation of the Scheldt, France will not oppose it. She will know how to respect their independence even in their errors.'

'After so frank a declaration, which manifests such a sincere desire of peace, his Britannic Majesty's ministers ought not to have any doubts with regard to the intentions of France. If her explanations appear insufficient, and if we are still obliged to hear a haughty language; if hostile preparations are continued in the English ports, after having exhausted every means to preserve peace we will prepare for war with a sense of the justice of our cause, and of our efforts to avoid this extremity. We will fight the English, whom we esteem, with regret, but we will fight them without fear.'[1]

A few words of comment must be added to this skilful note. It will be observed that the French still reserved their right of interfering for the assistance of insurgent nations under circumstances of which they themselves were to be the judge; that they still maintained their right to annul without the consent of the contracting parties the ancient treaties regulating the navi-

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxx. 262–266.

gation of the Scheldt, and that while repudiating all views of incorporating the Low Countries in France they announced their intention of occupying those provinces, not merely during the war, but for an undefined period after the war had ended. It will be observed, too, that moderate and courteous as it was in form, the note of Lebrun was of the nature of an ultimatum, threatening war if its explanations were not accepted as satisfactory, and if the military preparations of England continued. The question, however, which is most important in the controversy between the two nations is the sincerity of the French repudiation of views of conquest. Was it true that the annexation of Belgium and the invasion of Holland had been abandoned?

In order to judge these points the reader must bear in mind the whole train of events which have been narrated in this chapter. The English case was essentially a cumulative one, depending on many indications of French policy no one of which might perhaps alone have been decisive, but which when taken together produced an absolute certainty in the minds of the ministers that the French were determined to incorporate the Belgic provinces; that they were meditating a speedy invasion of the Dutch Republic, and that if an insurrection broke out in that Republic it would be immediately supported by French arms. Everything that has since become known of the secret intentions of the French Government appears to me to corroborate this view. At the very time when the correspondence that has been cited was continuing, urgent orders were sent to the French Commissioners to press on the measures assimilating the Belgic provinces to France in accordance with the decree of December 15, while the Executive Council received a memoir from some of the Dutch 'patriots' pointing out the defenceless condition of Zealand and inviting an immediate invasion of Holland. The project for invasion, which had for a time been laid aside, was revived; it was being carefully discussed at Paris at the precise period when the note of Lebrun was drawn up, and on January 10 it appeared to have been fully decided on, though on further reflection the enterprise was for the moment deferred.[1] Well-informed English agents reported that

[1] Sybel, ii. 102, 103. Compare Marsh's *Hist. of Politics*, i. 353-364.

the Executive Council were looking forward to an insurrection in Ireland and afterwards in England which would paralyse the English Government while the French troops poured into Holland.[1] The violence of language of prominent members of the Convention against all kings and monarchies, and against the Government of Great Britain in particular, exceeded all bounds,[2] and, on January 12, Brissot, in the name of the Diplomatic Committee, presented a long report to the Convention on the attitude of the British Government towards France. It foreshadowed war in every line. As usual, it professed much sympathy for the British nation, but it accused their Government, in a strain of violent invective, of having not only brought wholly frivolous charges against the French Republic, but of having also acted towards that Republic with systematic malevolence and insult. It urged the French Government to demand the repeal of the Alien Act, the removal of all restrictions on the export of provisions from England to France, and an immediate explanation of the armaments of England. War with England, it argued, would be a matter of little danger, for the English were already overwhelmed by their debt and taxation; Ireland was ripe for revolt, and India would almost certainly be severed from the British rule.[3]

The day after this extraordinary report was presented, the Convention ordered fifty-two ships of the line and thirty-two frigates to be immediately armed, and twenty-four new vessels to be constructed.[4] Grenville, on the other hand, in two peremptory and haughty notes, dated January 18 and 20, pronounced the French explanations wholly unsatisfactory, declared, in reply to the threat of Lebrun, that England would persist in those measures which her Government deemed essential for her security and for that of her allies, and refused either to receive the letters of credence of Chauvelin, to recognise in him any other position than that of an ordinary foreigner, or to exempt him from the provisions of the Alien Act.[5]

[1] See a letter of Miles, Jan. 18; Marsh, i. 366.

[2] It is impossible within my present limits to do justice to this part of the case, but the reader will find many specimens of the language used at this time in the Convention in Marsh, ch. xiv.

[3] *Moniteur*, Jan. 15, 1793.

[4] Bourgoing, deuxième partie, i. 318, 319.

[5] *Parl. Hist.* xxx. 266–269.

The attitude of Chauvelin was so hostile, and his connection with disaffected Englishmen so notorious, that the English Government would hold no confidential communication with him; but through the instrumentality of Miles, some correspondence was still kept with Maret, who had now become Chef de Département at the Foreign Office under Lebrun, and even with Lebrun himself. In a very earnest though very amicable letter, dated January 11, Miles had warned Maret that, unless the French Convention could be induced to recede from its present policy, war was absolutely inevitable. Could it be doubted, he urged, that the order given to the French generals to pursue the enemy into neutral territory was a violation of the independence of Powers that were not at war with France; that the decree opening the Scheldt was a violation of treaties which England had solemnly bound herself in 1788 to defend; that the incorporation of Savoy in the French Republic was in flagrant opposition to the French professions that they desired no conquests; that the decrees of November 19 and of December 15 were drawn up in such general terms that they were an invitation to all nations to revolt against their Governments, and a promise that France would assist every rebellion; that the reception by the National Assembly of English subjects who were openly conspiring against their Government was a gross insult, and a clear proof that England must consider herself comprised among the nations to whom French 'fraternity' was offered? If the Executive Council would retrace its steps on these points, war would not break out. Otherwise neither the interests nor the honour of England would permit her to acquiesce.[1]

All the English diplomatic correspondence of this time shows not only the extreme gravity but also the extreme difficulty of the situation. It was on January 12 that the Imperial and Prussian representatives announced to Grenville the approaching partition of Poland and the project of the exchange of the Austrian Netherlands for Bavaria, and thus introduced a new

[1] *Authentic Correspondence*, pp. 106–108. This letter is also printed by Mars, ii. 143–145. On the 7th, Maret had written a long letter to Miles complaining of the hostile attitude and language of the English ministers and especially of the tone of Grenville's despatch of Dec 31. A great part of it is given by Ernouf, pp. 113, 114. I do not quote it, as the arguments are much the same as those used by Lebrun.

and most formidable element of complication and division. Grenville at once communicated to Auckland the interview which had taken place and the total disapprobation which he had expressed in the name of the King's Government of the intended partition. 'It is impossible,' he continued, 'to foresee what the effect may be of his Majesty's determined resolution not to make himself a party to any concert of measures tending to this object.' On the proposed exchange of the Austrian Netherlands, however, he hesitated. 'I thought it advantageous,' he wrote, 'not to conceal from either of the ministers that I felt there were many circumstances in the present moment which might make such a project less objectionable in the eyes of the maritime Powers than it had hitherto been. His Majesty's servants are, however, extremely desirous of knowing the general ideas entertained by the Dutch ministers on a point in which the interests of the Republic are so immediately and materially concerned.' For the present every encouragement should be given for a reconciliation of the Austrian Netherlands to their former rulers. 'I am inclined to believe nothing would be so advantageous to our interests as the re-establishment of the sovereignty of the House of Austria there, on the footing of the ancient constitution, if that could be made the consequence of the French withdrawing their troops, according to the plan proposed from hence.' [1]

English and Dutch intelligence fully concurred about the imminence of an attack on Holland. On the 18th, Auckland reported that revolutionary papers were industriously scattered among the Dutch soldiers, and that Hope, the great banker at Amsterdam, who had excellent means of information, had warned him that an invasion of Holland was certainly resolved on; and the letter of Auckland crossed a letter of Grenville stating that he had received from Paris private and trustworthy information that the French had determined that their next campaign should be chiefly against Holland.[2] Auckland wrote that intelligence had arrived that 70,000 Austrians were ordered to march for the Low Countries. It was most important that they should come quickly. In the meantime, he said, he would

[1] Grenville to Auckland, Jan. 13, 1793.

[2] Auckland to Grenville, Jan. 18. Grenville to Auckland, Jan. 22, 1793.

do all he could to induce Holland to make the best of the short interval of peace. 'By the nature of the Dutch Constitution, under which the discretionary power given to the provinces and their representatives is extremely narrow in all deliberations tending to war, it will be impossible for their High Mightinesses to give me that explicit answer which it is my duty to require, without a previous reference to the provinces.' 'There is, in this country,' he added, 'a considerable party disposed to subvert the Government;' another party 'inclined to keep clear of French intervention, but solicitous to impede the measures of this Government;' a third party, 'perhaps the most numerous,' who from self-interest, short-sightedness, and 'attachment to commercial habits,' wish at any cost to keep neutral. Others, with the best intentions, 'sink under a sense of their own weak state, so ill-prepared to withstand the first inevitable shock.' Under such circumstances it was idle to expect much enthusiasm, cordiality, or promptitude, but Auckland believed that the announcement that an English land force might be expected, would be well fitted to encourage the Dutch.[1]

It would be a mistake to suppose that all who were in authority in France really desired war with England. Many sagacious men—and Lebrun was probably among the number—perceived the extreme danger of such a war, and dreaded the spirit that was prevailing; but the frenzy that was abroad blinded most men to difficulties; others knew that the guillotine lay beyond the most transient unpopularity, and believed that violent counsels were most likely to be popular,[2] and others, again, had speculated largely in the public funds, and desired

[1] Auckland to Grenville, Jan. 23, 1793.

[2] Thus Governor Morris, who observed events in Paris very closely, was convinced in December that it would be impossible for England to avoid war (*Works*, ii. 262). He describes how the French politicians 'affect to wish Britain would declare against them, and actually menace the Government with an appeal to the nation' (ib. 263), but, he added, 'in spite of that blustering they will do much to avoid a war with Great Britain *if the people will let them*. But the truth is that the populace of Paris influence in a great degree the public councils' (ib. 265). See too a letter of Captain Monro, Jan. 7, 1793. I may mention here that Chauvelin wrote to Lebrun, Jan. 7, that it was reported that Morris was in correspondence with the English minister and informed him of all that passed in Paris. Lebrun answered (Jan. 15) that he was confirmed in his suspicions of the ill-will and perfidy of Morris. 'Il travaille sourdement à nous nuire, et à donner connaissance au Gouvernement anglais de ce qui se passe chez nous.' I have not found any confirmation of this statement.

a war through the most sordid personal motives.[1] Maret, who was now assisting Lebrun at the Foreign Office, still hoped that a war between England and France might be averted, and he dictated instructions to Chauvelin strongly urging patience and moderation.[2] Talleyrand and Benoit, a secret agent employed in London, assured the French Government that the dispositions of Pitt were such that war with England could be avoided without difficulty if France desired it, provided the negotiations were placed in more conciliatory hands than those of Chauvelin; and similar language was held by De Maulde, who had come to Paris to complain of his removal from the Dutch Embassy, and who was able to attest the pacific sentiments both of Auckland and of the Dutch Pensionary, Van de Spiegel.[3] But the most important influence in favour of peace was now Dumouriez.

This general, who seemed at one time likely to play in the history of the French Revolution the part of Monk, if not the part of Napoleon, had long been feared and distrusted by the Jacobins. A grave division of opinion had broken out at the end of November, when Dumouriez wished to attack Holland by taking Maestricht, which he considered essential for the defence of Liége and of the Meuse, and when the Executive Council refused his request and resolved for the present to respect the neutrality of Holland. To the imprisonment, the trial, the execution of the King, Dumouriez was violently opposed, and he has declared in his Memoirs that France was at this time in reality governed by fifty miscreants equally cruel and absurd, supported by two or three thousand satellites drawn from the dregs of the provinces and steeped in every crime.[4] The Decree of December 15, and the measures that followed it, filled him with indignation. He had himself published, with the sanction of the Convention, a proclamation assuring the

[1] Maret, in a conversation with Lord Malmesbury in 1797, gave a curious account of the cause of the failure of his mission to England in 1792 and 1793. He said that Mr. Pitt had received him very well, that the failure of the negotiation should be attributed to the then French Government, who were bent on war, and that the great and decisive cause of the war was, 'quelques vingtaines d'individus marquans et en place, qui avaient joué à la baisse dans les fonds, et là ils avaient porté la nation à nous déclarer la guerre. Ainsi,' said he, 'nous devons tous nos malheurs à un principe d'agiotage.' *Malmesbury Diaries*, iii. 502, 503.

[2] Ernouf, pp. 116, 117.

[3] Compare Dumouriez, *Mémoires*, iii. 383, 384. Ernouf, pp. 110–113, 121.

[4] *Mémoires*, iii. 281.

Belgians that the French came to them only as friends and brothers; that they had no intention of meddling with their internal affairs, and that they left them at perfect liberty to frame their own Constitution. But the Convention had now proclaimed every nation which refused to throw off its old aristocratic institutions the enemy of France, and had sent down a troop of despotic French Commissioners, whose government was one continued scene of pillage, confiscations, proscriptions, and barefaced attempts to force the people to declare themselves French subjects. Like the Girondins, Dumouriez desired an independent but friendly Belgium, and he complained that the French were rapidly turning the population of these provinces into implacable enemies.[1] He refused to take any part in executing the Decree of the Convention, but when he remonstrated against it he was told very frankly that France had to wage a great war and to support an army of six hundred thousand men; that the plunder of Belgium was essential to the task, and that in the opinion of the ministers a total disorganisation of all neighbouring States was the most favourable condition for the spread of the Revolution.[2] This policy was deliberately pursued in the destruction of all the institutions and constituted authorities of the Belgic provinces. Dumouriez endeavoured to prevent it, by hastening the Convocation of the Primary Assemblies, and thus giving the inhabitants some voice in the management of their own affairs, but the Commissioners at once interposed and prevented this step.[3] They viewed his authority with constant jealousy; they interfered even with his military administration; and the Jacobin papers in Paris denounced him as a traitor, sold to the interests of the Duke of Orleans, or aspiring to a dictatorship or to an independent sovereignty as Duke of Brabant.[4]

The military situation also appeared to him extremely alarming. He had advocated an attack on Holland, partly because he believed it to be a rich and easy prey, and partly because he regarded the possession of Maestricht and Venlo as a matter of vital strategical importance. But he had been for-

[1] *Mémoires de Dumouriez*, iii. 277, 278, 296.

[2] Ibid. pp. 339, 340, 361. The reader will observe how perfectly this opinion of the French ministers justified the predictions of Burke.

[3] Ibid. pp. 302, 303.

[4] Ibid. pp. 285, 294, 295.

bidden to attack Maestricht, and his army was rapidly sinking into ruin. The whole organisation for the administration of the army, as it had existed in Paris under the monarchy, had been shattered by the Revolution. Almost all the old, experienced and competent administrators had been driven away to make room for men whose chief claim was the prominent part they had taken in the events of August 10 and in the September massacres, and the result was that the conquerors of Jemmapes, the men who had in a few weeks subdued the whole of the Belgic provinces, found themselves in a state of utter destitution. About 15,000 men had deserted. An equal number were in the hospitals. Six thousand horses of the artillery died at Tongres and at Liége for want of forage. During the months of December and January the troops at Liége were only half clothed. There was such a want of shoes, that thousands of soldiers were wearing wisps of straw tied round their feet. Their pay was long in arrear. Numbers were dying from want of food. Guns, saddles, equipments of every kind were deficient. The little discipline which had formerly existed had completely given way, and when Dumouriez attempted to restore it by the establishment of capital punishment for insubordination, the Commissioners interposed their veto. If under these circumstances the Austrians had advanced in force there seemed little chance of resistance, and Dumouriez feared that the Belgians, exasperated almost to madness by the oppressions of the Commissioners, would rise behind him, and cut off all possibility of retreat.[1]

Happily for the French, they had to deal in Flanders with most fatuous and incapable enemies. The Austrians, having dismantled the barrier forts and alienated the inhabitants by their constitutional innovations, had left these provinces so inadequately garrisoned, that at Jemmapes they had been overwhelmed by a French army which was nearly, if not quite, the double of their own;[2] and now, when the tide of popular feeling

[1] *Mémoires de Dumouriez*, iii. 247, 287–292, 338, 380. Dumouriez' strong statement of the hatred with which the inhabitants of the Austrian Netherlands now regarded the French, and of the probability that they would rise against them if a foreign army appeared within their borders, is fully corroborated by Governor Morris, *Works*, ii. 255, 269, 276.

[2] On the enormous preponderance of the French at Jemmapes see the facts collected by Bourgoing, *Hist. Diplomatique de l'Europe pendant la*

had turned, and when the invading army seemed almost reduced to impotence, they did nothing, still clinging to the antiquated military tradition that no important expedition should be undertaken in the winter.[1] Dumouriez therefore found it possible to quit his post. On the plea of ill-health, and under the threat of resignation if he was refused, he obtained leave of absence, and hastened to Paris, where he arrived on January 1. He hoped to obtain a revocation of the Decree of December 15, to organise measures for providing his army with necessaries, to acquire the direction of the war, and, if possible, to prevent the execution of the King. He found some strong supporters in the ministry, but on the whole he had little success, and several weeks passed in weary and unprofitable wrangling. The execution of the King on January 21 filled him with unfeigned horror, but a new scene of ambition was now suddenly opened to him. He emphatically maintained that even at this late period, if France desired it, it was not only possible, but easy, for her to continue at peace with both England and Holland,[2] and the reports of Benoit from England and of De Maulde from Holland pointed to him as the negotiator who was most likely to be acceptable to Pitt.[3] There was a proposal to send him to London, and he accepted it with eagerness, but after a long discussion in the Council it was rejected by three to two. Lebrun, however, and Garat, who formed the minority, without the knowledge of the other ministers arranged with Dumouriez that he should return to Holland, and undertake a negotiation with England through the medium of Lord Auckland. It was at the same time decided that Maret should return to England to negotiate with Pitt.[4]

It was on January 28, when the execution of the King was

Révolution, 2me partie, tome i. p. 257.

[1] Frederick the Great had already shaken this notion, which the French Revolutionists and Napoleon destroyed. A similar change passed over naval warfare in the eighteenth century. Thus Walpole wrote in Jan. 1760: 'Our army was under arms for fourteen hours on the 23rd, expecting the French, and several of the men were frozen when they should have dismounted. What milksops the Marlboroughs and Turennes, the Blakes and Van Tromps appear now, who whipped into winter quarters and into port the moment their noses looked blue. Sir Cloudesley Shovel said that an admiral would deserve to be broke who kept great ships out after the end of September, and to be shot if after October. There is Hawke in the bay weathering this winter, after conquering in a storm.' —Walpole to Montagu.

[2] *Mémoires*, iii. 364, 379.

[3] Ibid. pp. 383–385.

[4] Ibid. pp. 385–387.

already known, and when war was looked upon in Holland as certain and imminent, that Auckland received in the middle of the night a secret and unexpected visit from De Maulde. He said that Dumouriez had returned to Ghent to take command of the army, and that he wished for a conference with Auckland in order to try to arrange a peace. Auckland answered that, though he had once expressed a readiness for such a conference, everything was changed by the horrid murder of the King; that he had no wish to see anyone representing the murderers; that even if Dumouriez wished to make peace he could not control the anarchy in Paris. A repudiation of the decrees authorising the opening of the Scheldt in defiance of the Treaty of Münster and claiming to interfere with the internal affairs of other countries, and the withdrawal of the French troops within their own borders, were the only terms England could now accept; and these were terms to which it was hopeless to expect the French Convention to consent.

The reception was not promising, but De Maulde earnestly persisted, and his language opened out strange vistas of possibility to the English minister. Dumouriez, he said, was most anxious to meet Auckland, and he would do so even within the Dutch frontier. Time was pressing, for if no arrangements were made the invasion of Holland must at once take place; but it was a complete mistake to suppose that it was impossible to come to an arrangement. The Executive Council were most anxious to avoid war with England, and Dumouriez himself was by no means inclined to act the part of a mere agent. Auckland spoke of him as the representative of the murderers of the King. In truth he looked upon that tragedy with unmixed detestation, and if he had consented to resume the command of the French army after it had been accomplished, this was simply because he was nowhere safe except at the head of his troops. The danger of any man who had any name had now become extreme. 'Paris was in the possession of 20,000 or 30,000 desperate ruffians from the different departments, capable of every excess that human depravity can dictate and the most hardened cruelty execute.' 'He suggested,' Auckland continues, 'a strange idea, that Dumouriez's great ambition is to negotiate matters into a practicable system of government, and when the

whole is completed to be received as ambassador in England.' While the negotiation was in suspense De Maulde thought that hostilities would not begin, and if they did it would be only in a very small and merely colourable way. Auckland promised at once to refer the matter for instructions to his Government, but he told him frankly that he could give him no hope of success. He gave money, however, in this interview both to De Maulde and to his secretary, Jonbert, and he wrote home that he was 'inclined to gather' that Dumouriez himself might be gained. He asked Grenville if in that case he might offer him 20,000*l.* or 25,000*l.* and half as much to De Maulde.[1]

Next day De Maulde returned, bringing a letter from Dumouriez asking for an interview on the frontier, and in this conversation and in a third, which took place on the following day, he more fully developed his project. He assured Auckland that he would find Dumouriez's sentiments about the murder and the murderers of the King very like his own, and he suggested that the question of the Austrian Netherlands might be settled by giving those provinces to the Elector of Bavaria, and allowing Bavaria to pass to Austria. If the neutrality of the maritime Powers continued only a short time longer, this exchange, he thought, might without much difficulty be effected. The ultimate object of Dumouriez, if Auckland would assist him, was to make England the 'armed mediator' for restoring peace to Europe. Auckland naturally asked how far these plans were sanctioned by the authorities in Paris. De Maulde answered that Dumouriez had told the Executive Council that he would seek an interview with Auckland; that he had received from them full powers and had shown them his letter to Auckland,[2] but that he had further views of which they were ignorant. His main object was to gain the full confidence of the army, and with its assistance to restore peace and prosperity under some form of government, and at the proper moment 'he would attempt it in a way which would astonish all mankind.'[3]

[1] Auckland wrote to Grenville no less than three letters on Jan. 28 (one official and the other two secret and confidential) describing this interview.

[2] According to the account given by Dumouriez in his 'Mémoires,' this statement was not true. Lebrun and Garat alone were informed of the intentions of Dumouriez, and the affair was not brought before the Council. *Mémoires*, iii. 385.

[3] Auckland to Grenville, Jan. 29 31, 1793.

Auckland expressed himself to his Government overwhelmed by the responsibility which these strange interviews had thrown upon him, and quite unable to come to any decision about the sincerity or intentions of Dumouriez. His doubts must always be shared by historians, and it is now idle to conjecture what might have been the consequences to Europe if the projects foreshadowed by De Maulde had come to pass. Dumouriez, in his own brief account of the matter, has greatly exaggerated the alacrity with which Auckland received the overture, and it may, I think, be confidently added that he has greatly misrepresented his own intentions. He says that his object was to secure the neutrality of Holland and England at a time when the military situation was almost desperate, but that, having rendered this service to his country, he meant publicly to detach himself from the murderers of the King, and to retire as an emigrant to the Hague.[1] This account is not consistent with the letters of Auckland, and it is, to me at least, incredible that a man as ambitious and as clear-sighted as Dumouriez undoubtedly was, can have either wished to sacrifice the power which he obtained through his command of the army, or imagined that, if he did so, any treaty which he signed would be observed.

Before the interview between Dumouriez and Auckland could take place, another train of events had come to maturity, which made it useless or impossible. The execution of the King on January 21 had hurried on the inevitable catastrophe. Morris, in relating to Jefferson the circumstances of the tragedy, predicted with his usual sagacity some of its effects. 'I believe,' he said, 'that the English will be wound up to a pitch of enthusiastic horror against France which their cool and steady temper seems to be scarcely susceptible of.'[2] The ghastly scenes of the September murders; the almost daily accounts of fresh murders and outrages perpetrated by the present rulers of France; the torrent of insults poured upon the English Government by prominent French politicians; the circular letter of Monge; the report of Brissot; the reception of disaffected Englishmen by the Convention; the constant rumours of French intrigues in England and Ireland, had all contributed to raise the anti-Gallican sentiment to a point of horror and repulsion

[1] *Mémoires*, iii. 394, 395.

[2] *Works*, ii. 276.

that it was not easy to restrain. The diplomatic negotiation between the two countries had already ceased. Lord Grenville had formally announced to Chauvelin that England would not permit the treaty relating to the navigation of the Scheldt to be annulled, and that if France desired peace with England she must abandon her conquests and confine herself within her territory. The French Government had, as formally, announced their determination of maintaining the opening of the Scheldt and of continuing their occupation of Belgium, and they had threatened to declare war if the hostile preparations of England continued. Grenville had rejoined that England would persist in the measures which she deemed necessary for her security, and he had positively refused to receive the credentials of Chauvelin, or to recognise him as possessing any other position than that which he had derived from the King of France. Such was the situation when the news of the murder of Lewis XVI. arrived. Since the Massacre of St. Bartholomew no event in a foreign country had produced such a thrill of horror in England. The representations in the theatres were countermanded. The Court mourning was adopted by the whole population. With the exception of a single Whig politician,[1] it was worn by every member of the House of Commons. At the corners of streets, in every public place, the details of the execution were placarded, hawked about, and eagerly discussed by indignant crowds, and when the King drove out, his carriage was surrounded by a mob crying 'War with France!' The horror of the nation was expressed from countless pulpits, while the Sacrament was exposed on the Catholic altars. For a time scarcely a dissentient voice was heard, and Fox himself declared in an address to the electors of Westminster that there was not a person in Europe, out of France, who 'did not consider this sad catastrophe as a most revolting act of cruelty and injustice.'[2]

Pitt at once seized the opportunity. On January 24, when the torrent of emotion was at its height, Grenville wrote a letter to Chauvelin directing him within eight days to leave the

[1] See Ashton's *Old Times*, p. 285.

[2] *Annual Register*, 1793, p. 229. On the impression produced in England, see some illustrations collected by Ernouf, p. 119.

country. 'The character,' he wrote, 'with which you have been invested at this Court, and the functions of which have been so long suspended, being now entirely terminated by the fatal death of his late Most Christian Majesty, you have no more any public character here. The King can no longer, after such an event, permit your residence here.'

On the 28th the whole correspondence between the King's ministers and Chauvelin was laid before Parliament, with a royal message, in which the late event in Paris was designated as an 'atrocious act,' and an immediate augmentation of the military and naval forces was demanded. It was necessary, the message said, 'for maintaining the security and rights of the King's dominions, for supporting his allies, and for opposing views of aggrandisement and ambition on the part of France which would be at all times dangerous to the general interests of Europe, but are peculiarly so when connected with the propagation of principles which lead to the violation of the most sacred duties, and are utterly subversive of the peace and order of all civil society.'[1]

Pitt had probably never represented more truly the prevailing sentiments of the English people than when he dismissed Chauvelin. His act was intended as a protest against what nearly all Englishmen regarded as the cruel and unprovoked murder of a friendly sovereign; and it must be remembered that Chauvelin had no acknowledged diplomatic character, that his unofficial negotiation had ended in an irreconcilable difference, and that he had, as an individual, given the gravest provocation to the Government. As it was truly said, no English minister who mixed in monarchical, as Chauvelin had done in republican intrigues, would have been tolerated in Paris for a week. Besides this, if, as Pitt believed, the war had become inevitable, it was a matter of high policy to enter into it supported by a strong wave of popular feeling. Nothing can be more certain than that neither the murder of the King nor any other change in the internal government of France would have induced him to commence it; but when for other reasons it had become unavoidable he naturally sought to carry with him the moral forces of indignation and enthusiasm which might contribute to its success.

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxx. 238, 239, 269.

By refusing to hold any further communication with the representatives of the murderers in Paris, Pitt represented and satisfied those feelings, and he was certain of a genuine popular support if the French chose to make his action the occasion for war.

The question was, I think, essentially a question of policy. After all that had happened, Pitt had, it appears to me, a full right to dismiss Chauvelin, and the expediency of the measure depended mainly on conditions of public feeling which are best judged by contemporary opinion. Two evil results, however, undoubtedly followed this measure of the Government. It precipitated a war which, however, had become almost absolutely certain, and it alone gave some faint colour of plausibility to the charge of those who have endeavoured to represent the great French war as an unwarrantable attempt to interfere with the internal government of France.

The end was very near, but it had not yet come. Chauvelin might have stayed in England for eight days, but he chose to depart on the day following his dismissal. The next day a despatch arrived from Lebrun formally recalling him. It was written on January 22, and is said to have been drawn up by Maret.[1] Like everything which at this time fell from his pen, it was plausible, dignified, and conciliatory, and it was evidently intended to delay if not to prevent the rupture. As the English Government had declined to receive his credentials, Chauvelin was directed at once to quit London, but he was to leave a letter for Lord Grenville, saying that, as his presence there could be of no further use, he was going to France to lay the case before the Executive Council. He was to add, however, that if the British Government, 'reverting to more seemly sentiments,' desired to be at harmony with France, the French ministers would do everything which was honourably in their power to re-establish good relations between the two countries. They wished for peace. They respected England as the oldest of free countries. They knew that even the most successful war with her would be a calamity to the world; but they were persuaded that if this crime against humanity were committed, impartial history would throw the whole blame on the English Government. The only definite point at issue on which the

[1] See Ernouf, p. 119.

note touched was the Alien Act. It could not, the writer urged, be defended by the French regulations about passports, for those applied to all travellers, while the English law was directed against foreigners alone.

The importance of the despatch did not lie in its arguments. It lay in its conciliatory tone, and especially in the concluding announcement that Maret was about immediately to go to England as Chargé d'Affaires to take care of the papers at the French Legation. Chauvelin, before going, was to inform Lord Grenville of this fact.[1]

Had it been known a few days earlier, it might have had a great influence, but it was now too late. Chauvelin received the despatch while he was already on the road, and the contents were in consequence never communicated to the English ministers.

On the 28th, Reinhardt, the secretary who had been left in charge of the French Legation, wrote describing the meeting of Parliament and the excitement and rumours that were abroad. 'It seems evident,' he said, 'that the British Cabinet has unanimously decided on war with France, that public opinion is wholly unfavourable to us, and that, even if there were less unanimity, we could not prudently separate the Government from the nation.' At the same time, he adds, the first excitement produced by the death of the King has abated. The dangers of the war are more clearly seen, and a pacific overture might have excellent effects. It would either prevent the war, and thus deprive France of half her enemies, or it would embarrass the ministry and break the present formidable unanimity in Parliament, or 'even if, as I believe, war is inevitable, what we now do will decide whether that war shall last three months or three years.'[2]

Maret arrived in London on the afternoon of the 30th. He had passed Chauvelin in the night without recognition, and it was not until his arrival that he learnt the details of what had taken place, and the non-delivery of the despatch which was intended to prepare the English ministers for his arrival. He at once announced his presence by letter to Lord Grenville,

[1] Lebrun to Chauvelin, Jan. 22, 1793 (French Foreign Office).

[2] Reinhardt to Lebrun, Jan. 28, 1793.

but he thought it advisable not to describe himself as Chargé d'Affaires, but simply as an agent entrusted with the archives at the French Legation. Such a character, he explained to his Government, opened the door to informal and confidential communications, whereas, if he at once assumed a diplomatic character, the English Government would be driven to the alternative of either formally accepting him or expelling him from the country. He did not see the ministers, but he saw Miles, and apparently some other persons who were behind the scenes, and he sent Lebrun a full and curious report on the state of affairs. Miles agreed with Reinhardt that a certain reaction in favour of peace had shown itself among the middle classes, but the Prince of Wales was reported to have said that the mission of Maret was too late; that if God Almighty came over as an envoy He could not now prevent a war, and that it would break out before three weeks. The ministry had held a council late at night to consider the question whether the French envoy should be received. He was informed that the King's personal influence had been employed, through the intervention of Lord Hawkesbury, to induce the ministers to refuse to see him, as it had before been employed in favour of the dismissal of Chauvelin. But Pitt and Grenville urged the opposite policy, and a strong party on the ministerial side in Parliament insisted that while every preparation should be made for war, any reasonable proposal of the French ministry should still be listened to. 'The death of the King,' continued Maret, 'has produced the effect which we have foreseen. The hatred of the French name is now at its height. That portion of the nation which is not engaged in commerce and which does not possess property wishes for war. The mourning ordered by the Court is worn by every man who is able to procure for himself a black coat. This universal mourning obliges me to see no one, for I should be received nowhere, nor could I even leave the house without being exposed to the insults and ignorant ferocity of the portion of the nation which is still called here the populace.' He added, however, that the merchants of the City and also the country gentry wished for peace; that the news of his own arrival in London had caused the funds to rise three per cent.; that the party which desired par-

liamentary reform was still active, and that the ministry were divided. Pitt sincerely desired peace. He knew that both his supremacy and his favourite schemes of policy depended on it, but, since the death of the King, Maret believed that the other ministers inclined to war. Chauvelin had made himself personally obnoxious, and his dismissal was due to the irresistible instinctive explosion of indignation that followed the execution of the King. Ministers, however, were surprised, and the warlike party gratified, by the precipitation with which he left the country, and those who wished for war were hoping that the French would declare it. If the French Government acted in accordance with this wish, there was no more to be said; if not, Lebrun was entreated to send immediate instructions whether he wished Dumouriez to be the negotiator or desired to entrust the task to Maret himself. 'Time is pressing. . . . To-day they are disposed to hear me, and it is not improbable that they would receive our illustrious general; but dispositions may change in a few days.' The newspapers, he added, had mentioned his arrival, and he noticed that it was the ministerial papers that spoke of it most favourably.[1]

Before this report could arrive at its destination the die was cast. On February 1, almost immediately after the arrival of Chauvelin in Paris, the Convention declared war against both the King of England and the Stadholder of Holland, and orders were sent to Dumouriez at once to invade Holland.

On February 4, before the news of the French declaration of war had reached London, Grenville wrote to Auckland that the ministers had been very seriously considering the proposal of Dumouriez for an interview. Doubts of his sincerity, objections to treating with anyone who could be regarded as a representative of the regicides, and a profound disbelief in the possibility of anyone now answering for the future proceedings of France, weighed heavily on their minds; but nevertheless the King, wishing to omit no honourable means to peace, directed Auckland to see Dumouriez. He must tell him, however, that he could enter into no negotiation till the embargo which the

[1] Ernouf, pp. 124-129. Dumouriez erroneously stated in his *Mémoires* that Maret had not been suffered to go to London, but had been turned back at Dover, and this statement has been often repeated.

French had just laid on all English ships in French ports was raised, and he must tell him also that in consequence of that embargo, and also of 'the inconvenience which arose from the speculations in our public funds occasioned by the equivocal situation and the conduct of M. Maret,' his Majesty has thought fit to order that person and his secretary to quit the kingdom, and will permit no other agent employed by the Executive Council to remain there. Auckland was instructed to hear the suggestions of Dumouriez, and to ask how he could carry them into effect, but he must state clearly that the Chauvelin correspondence contained the sole grounds on which England would negotiate, and that an abandonment of all French conquests and a withdrawal of the obnoxious decrees were necessary conditions of a peace. England was now connected with other Powers, and she must take care that no act of hers was injurious to their interests. She had not, however, broken her neutrality; she would not do so unless French acts left her no alternative; but from the recent tenor of French policy the English Government had no doubt of the aggressive designs of France, and it was partly because Holland was still so unprepared that the smallest delay was to her advantage, that they permitted this negotiation to take place.[1]

It was evident that a negotiation undertaken in this spirit could have no result. For the past fortnight the English Government seemed to have given up all hopes of peace, and on neither side was there now any real disposition to make sacrifices for it. On the 7th Maret quitted London in obedience to the order of the King, and at Calais he met the messenger who was sent from Paris to recall him, and to communicate to him the declaration of war. Another messenger from Paris arrived in time to prevent the proposed interview between Dumouriez and Auckland.

To complete this long diplomatic history one more despatch must be quoted, which does much to elucidate the true sentiments of the English Government. It shows that it was their determination to form at once a close connection with Austria and Prussia against France, but that they had still great hopes of defining and limiting the war and of bringing about a

[1] Grenville to Auckland, Feb. 4, 1793.

speedy pacification of Europe. The letter I refer to was written to Eden, who was just moving from Berlin to Vienna, and was dated February 5, before the news of the French declaration of war had arrived in London. Eden was instructed to endeavour to establish a close connection with Austria on the affairs of France, and in order that there should be no jealousy or concealment he was to inform the Emperor of the overture of Dumouriez, and to add that while the King thought it best not wholly to reject it, he was fully resolved not to depart from any of the views or principles laid down in the correspondence with Chauvelin. 'The King,' Grenville said, 'desires to enter into a formal engagement with the Emperor and the King of Prussia on the principles which have always been opened to both those Powers. . . . Feeling the interests of his own dominions and the general security of Europe endangered by the conquests made by France in the course of the present war, connected as they are with the propagation of the most destructive principles, he engages to consider no arrangement as satisfactory on the part of France which shall not include the abandonment of all her conquests and the renunciation of all views of interference on her part in the interior of other countries, and of all measures of aggression or hostility against them; provided that the Emperor shall on his part engage that if France shall, within the space of two months from this time, agree to make peace upon the terms above stated, adding to them stipulations for the security of her Most Christian Majesty and of her family, the Emperor will on his part consent to such a peace; and lastly that if in consequence of the refusal of these terms by France the present war should be continued and his Majesty should take part in it, their Majesties engage not to make peace with France, except by mutual consent,' on any terms short of these. 'The proposal,' the despatch continues, 'of concluding peace with France in the present moment on the terms of the abandonment of her conquests and the renunciation of all hostile measures as above stated, may appear at first view to militate with the general ideas held out by the two Courts of Vienna and Berlin of being indemnified for the expenses of the last campaign. You will, however, observe that, with respect to the particular objects of

indemnification stated by those Courts,[1] it is not inconsistent with either of them. Of that part of the plan which relates to Poland, I have already stated, both to M. Jacobi and M. Stadion, in the most unequivocal terms, the King's disapprobation of that project against which you have made such frequent though ineffectual representations. It is, however, of a nature entirely unconnected with the settlement of the affairs of France, and though his Majesty never can consider it but with disapprobation and regret, he has no interest to oppose himself to its execution by any active measures on his part. The Austrian part of the plan appears in every point of view considerably less objectionable though certainly attended with great difficulties. But the execution of such a plan, if it can at all be carried into effect, obviously depends on obliging the French to withdraw their forces from those provinces, and is so far not inconsistent with the proposal of a pacification on the terms above mentioned.'[2]

Similar overtures were at the same time made by the English Government to Russia. As early as December 29, indeed, Pitt had proposed to that Power that a joint representation should be made to France assuring her that if she would abandon her conquests, withdraw her troops within her own limits, rescind the acts which were injurious to the rights of other nations, and give pledges that she would for the future abstain from molesting her neighbours, all acts of hostility against her should cease, and no attempt would be made to interfere with her Government or Constitution. The French declaration of war interrupted these negotiations, and it was not until 1800 that the intended representation was disclosed. The language of Fox on this occasion is very remarkable. He expressed his complete approbation of the policy indicated in the despatch, but said that as its contents had never been communicated to the French it was mere idle verbiage. The obvious answer is that as far as England was concerned, the terms on which Grenville insisted were simply a reproduction of those which were formally announced to France in the correspondence with Chauvelin, and the English Government had in fact lost no opportunity of

[1] The partition of Poland and the exchange of the Austrian Netherlands for Bavaria.

[2] Grenville to Eden, Feb. 5, 1793.

declaring its firm intention not to interfere with the internal government of France.[1]

There are few pages of English history which have been more grossly and mischievously misrepresented than that which we are considering.[2] The account which I have given will, if I mistake not, fully establish that the war between England and France was of a wholly different kind from the war between France and the great German Powers which had broken out in the preceding year. France might, indeed, with no great difficulty, have avoided the German war; but she had undoubtedly received much real provocation, and provocation of a kind which no powerful monarchy would have endured. The German war was also, in a very great degree, an anti-Revolutionary war, undertaken in the interests of monarchy. This was the attitude which Burke from the beginning desired England to assume, but Pitt wholly rejected his policy. It is certain beyond all reasonable doubt that he sincerely and earnestly desired peace with France; that from the outbreak of the Revolution to the death of Lewis XVI. he abstained from any kind of interference with her internal concerns; that he never favoured directly or indirectly the attacks of Austria and Prussia upon her; that he again and again announced, in the most formal terms, the determination of England to remain neutral in the struggle and especially to abstain from all interference with the internal affairs of France. All the schemes of policy to which he had especially attached his reputation and his ambition, depended for their success upon the continuance of peace, and there is overwhelming evidence that, until an advanced period in 1792, the English Government had no doubt that they could keep clear of the contest and had made no adequate preparations for a war.

It is also, I conceive, certain beyond all reasonable doubt that the war of 1793 was forced upon England by gross and

[1] See *Parl. Hist.* xxxiv. 1313, 1314, 1359; *Wilberforce's Life*, ii. 13; Russell's *Life of Fox*, ii. 301–303.

[2] I must acknowledge that, many years ago, misled by a most misleading pamphlet of Cobden and by the much higher authority of Buckle, I introduced into my *History of Rationalism* a sentence (which has been expunged in the later editions) blaming Pitt for the French war. It shows at least that I had no undue bias in favour of the conclusion to which a more careful investigation has led me.

various provocations proceeding from the Revolutionary party in France. The decree of November 19 promising French assistance to any subjects who revolted against their rulers, the manner in which English disaffected citizens were received by the French Convention, the language of insult which was habitually employed by the most prominent politicians in France, and the public attitude and well-known intrigues of Chauvelin, constituted together an amount of provocation of the most serious kind. No continental nation which was strong enough to resent it would have endured such provocation. Most assuredly Revolutionary France would not have done so, and it is almost certain that if the father of Pitt had been at this time directing English affairs these things alone would have produced a war. But these things alone would never have moved Pitt and Grenville from their policy of peace. The real governing motives of the war are to be found elsewhere. They are to be found in the formal and open violation by France of the treaty relating to the Scheldt, which England had guaranteed—a violation which was based upon grounds that would invalidate the whole public law of Europe, and attempted under circumstances that clearly showed that it was part of a scheme for annexing Belgium, conquering Holland and perhaps threatening England with invasion. They are to be found in the overwhelming evidence of the intention of the French to incorporate in their own republic those Belgic provinces whose independence of France was a matter of vital interest to the security of England; in the long train of circumstances which convinced the English ministers of the determination of Revolutionary France to invade Holland and to overthrow that Dutch Government which England had distinctly bound herself by a recent treaty to defend.

These were the real grounds of the French war, and they were grounds by which, in my judgment, it may be amply justified. Several of the English wars of the eighteenth century were undertaken for reasons which were either unjust or doubtful or inadequate, but the war of 1793 is not among the number. Probably the only policy by which a collision with France could have been avoided would have been a policy, not of neutrality, but of active sympathy with the Revolution. But such a policy would have outraged the conscience of England, would have

placed the ministry which adopted it, in violent opposition to English public opinion, and would have added incalculably to the dangers that were threatening Europe. Nor is it in the least likely that in the scene of combustion, aggression, and general anarchy that was opening, England could even then have escaped a war, though she might have possibly fought with other enemies and in another cause.

Till within a fortnight of the declaration of war by France, the English Government does not appear to me to have taken any step that cannot easily be defended, but its conduct during that last short interval is more doubtful. Whether the expulsion of Chauvelin after the execution of the King was not precipitate and unwise, whether the language of Grenville in his later correspondence with Chauvelin and Lebrun was not unduly haughty and unconciliatory, whether the overtures of Dumouriez might not have been more cordially received, are points which are open to serious doubt. In judging these things, however, it must be remembered that the provocations which produced and justified the war had come to their full maturity before the death of the King. The case was complete. The war in the opinion of the English ministers had become absolutely inevitable, and their object was therefore no longer to avert it, but rather to rouse and brace the energies of England for the struggle. In entering on a great war the management and guidance of popular passions and prejudices is one of the supreme arts of statesmanship, and it is by its effects on English public opinion that the somewhat haughty and unconciliatory attitude of the English Government in these last weeks must be mainly judged. There are some questions upon which the opinion of a later historian is always of more value than that of a contemporary statesman. He writes when the tangled skein has been unravelled, when the doubtful issues have been decided, when the wisdom of a policy has been judged by its results. But the course of conduct which is most adapted to the transient conditions of public feeling can never be so truly estimated as by a great statesman of the time. There is a period when attempts to delay an inevitable war are only construed as signs of weakness, timidity, and vacillation, and there is much reason to believe that a more conciliatory or procrastinating policy after the execution of the

King would have had no result except to damp the ardour of the English people, and to alienate or discourage their allies.

It is certain, however, that the French war was entered upon by Pitt with extreme reluctance, and that not only the formal declaration of war, but also the real provocation, came from Paris. The war was not in its origin either a war against revolution, or a war of conquest, though it speedily and by an inevitable process acquired something of both characters. When the struggle had once begun, the party which had been preaching a crusade against France as the centre of a contagious anarchy naturally acquired increased power and influence, which the horrors of the Reign of Terror, the growth of sedition in Great Britain and Ireland, and the triumphs of the Revolutionary armies, all contributed to strengthen. On the other hand Pitt found himself indisputably superior to his enemies on sea. The financial schemes for which he specially cared had been interrupted, and it is not surprising that he should have come to adopt the policy of Dundas and look to the conquest of the rich sugar islands of France as a chief end of the war. 'Indemnity for the past,' as well as 'security for the future,' became the avowed object of the English Government, and, while their military enterprises nearer home were marked by extreme debility and inefficiency, island after island was speedily conquered.[1]

To the magnitude and danger of the war Pitt was for a long period entirely blind. 'It will be a very short war,' he is reported to have said, 'and certainly ended in one or two campaigns.' 'No, sir,' Burke answered, when such language was addressed to him, 'it will be a long war and a dangerous war, but it must be undertaken.' That a bankrupt and disorganised Power like France could be a serious enemy, seemed to Pitt wholly incredible. The French were already, he was accustomed to say, 'in a gulf of bankruptcy, and he could almost calculate the time by which their resources would be consumed.'[2] So convinced was he that the enterprise before him would be short and easy, that this great financier entirely abstained

[1] See *Wilberforce's Life*, ii. 92, 391; Moore's *Life of Sheridan*, ii. 203, 204.

[2] *Wilberforce's Life*, ii. 10, 11, 92, 332.

at the opening of the war from imposing any considerable war taxation, and at once added enormously in its very earliest stage to that national debt which he believed it to be his great mission to liquidate. A speedy peace, the rich colonies that were certain to be wrested from France, and the magical virtues of the Sinking Fund, would soon, he believed, restore the finances of England to their former prosperity. It was only very slowly and painfully that the conviction was forced upon him that England had entered on a mortal struggle, the most dangerous, the most doubtful, and the most costly she had ever waged.

In the history of Continental Europe, the nineteenth century may be truly said to begin with the French Revolution. In the history of England the great line of secular demarcation is to be found in the opening of the French war of 1793. From this time English parties and politics assumed a new complexion, and trains of causes came into action which only attained their maturity at a much later period. Pitt still retained for many years his ascendency, but the character of his ministry had wholly changed. All those schemes of parliamentary, financial, and commercial reform, which had occupied his mind in the earlier and brighter period of his ministry, were necessarily cast aside during the agonies of the struggle, but they were not simply adjourned till quieter times. The strong impulse towards wise and temperate reform which had prevailed among the political classes in England since the closing years of the American War was suddenly checked by the French Revolution, and a reaction set in which was the most formidable in English history and which continued with little abatement for about thirty years. In the mean time the immense increase of the national burdens, the sudden and enormous agglomeration of population in manufacturing towns, and the growing difficulties in Ireland, had brought to the surface problems which imperatively required the most enlightened and vigilant statesmanship. But the Tory party which had carried England triumphantly through the great French war proved wholly incompetent to deal with such problems. In the eyes of men like Percival and Eldon every privilege was sacred, every change was a step to revolution. Language was employed about the relation of

subjects to their rulers scarcely less servile than that of the divines of the Restoration, and a sullen resistance to all reform, a besotted attachment to every abuse, became for many years the characteristics of that great party which still professed to follow in the footsteps of Pitt and to derive much of its philosophy from the writings of Burke.

The influence of the French Revolution on the Whig party was equally disastrous. The enthusiasm with which some of the leading members of that party regarded it, and their furious opposition to the measures that led to the outbreak of the war in 1793, as well as to its renewal in 1803, gave them an anti-national bias at least as strong as that which the Tory party had exhibited when it was most tainted by Jacobitism. In public and private, Fox conspicuously displayed it.[1] His conduct at the time of the mutiny of the Nore forms a shameful instance of an English statesman subordinating to party animosity all considerations of patriotism in one of the darkest moments of his country's history; and the censure which is implied in the eulogy of Scott, that Fox at least *died* a Briton, may be amply justified by more than one passage in his correspondence. The French Revolution, as Burke had predicted, soon incarnated itself in a great military despotism, and Europe groaned under the appalling calamity of transcendent genius and energy united with gigantic power and employed in the service of the most colossal egotism and the most insatiable and unscrupulous ambition. But the Whig party assuredly gained no laurels during that fearful struggle. Their incessant cavils at Arthur Wellesley, the attempt of a large section of the party to arrest the action of the Government when the return of Napoleon from Elba threatened to reopen the chapter of calamities which had so lately been closed, the fashion that long prevailed among Radical writers and speakers of eulogising Napoleon and deploring the results of Waterloo,[2] very naturally disgusted and

[1] Grey once remonstrated with him on the indiscretion of some of his language in favour of France. Fox answered: 'The truth is, I am gone something further in hate to the English Government than perhaps you and the rest of your friends are, and certainly further than can with prudence be avowed. The triumph of the French Government over the English does in fact afford me a degree of pleasure which it is very difficult to disguise.' (Fox's *Correspondence*, iii. 349.)

[2] See e.g. Hazlitt's *Life of Napoleon*. Byron made no secret of

alienated their countrymen. There were, no doubt, some exceptions in the party. The great secession from it in the beginning of the war showed that to many of its leading members party names were less precious than the real interests of their country. The language of Sheridan at the time of the mutiny of the Nore was very honourable to himself, though it is a strange illustration of the temper of the party that it should have been thought deserving of peculiar credit. Henry Grattan, who had never bowed the knee to the French Moloch, stood conspicuous in the small group of Whigs who loyally supported the Government at the time of the return from Elba. But the general tone of the Whig party during these terrible years could not be mistaken, and it was not until the reform agitation of 1832 effaced the memory of its foreign policy, and until statesmen of another stamp acquired an ascendency in its councils, that it regained its hold on the affections of the English people.

Into these later developments of English politics I do not propose to enter. The outbreak of the war of 1793 closing the peaceful period of the ministry of Pitt forms an appropriate termination for a history of England in the eighteenth century, though it will be necessary for the completion of my narrative to carry that portion of my work which relates to Ireland as far as the Legislative Union of 1800. It remains for me now to give an outline of the chief social, industrial, and moral changes which accompanied the political movements that I have described, and which form a not less essential part of the history of the nation.

the regret with which he looked on Waterloo. Napier, the historian of the Peninsular War, said of Napoleon, in one place that 'he was the only support of real freedom in Europe,' and in another that 'self had no place in his policy, save as his personal glory was identified with France and her prosperity. Never before did the world see a man soaring so high, and devoid of all selfish ambition.' (See Bruce's *Life of Sir W. Napier*, ii. 25.) Horner was no admirer of Napoleon, but he voted against the renewal of the war after the return from Elba. He wrote, at the beginning of the campaign which ended with Waterloo, that he fervently wished 'for a successful resistance by France to the invasion of the allies;' and when Waterloo had been fought, he deplored 'the degradation of our army in being the main instrument of this warfare against Freedom and Civilisation.' (See *Horner's Life*, ii. 258, 274.) Robert Hall said of Waterloo: 'That battle and its results seemed to me to put back the clock of the world six degrees.' (Hall's *Works*, vi. 124.)

CHAPTER XXIII.

In undertaking to write the history of England in the eighteenth century I had proposed to allot a considerable space to the history of manners and morals, to industrial developments, prevailing opinions, theories, and tendencies. One chapter in an earlier volume has accordingly been exclusively devoted to the social characteristics of that portion of the century which preceded the accession of George III., and another to religious tendencies and changes, and in describing the course of legislation and of parliamentary controversy I have seldom failed to enlarge upon those portions which throw some light upon the moral, material, or intellectual condition of the people. In the last chapters, however, these topics have been somewhat neglected. Foreign policy has occupied the foremost place, and the necessity of following in detail long courses of diplomatic correspondence has given a different character to my work. I propose in the present chapter to repair the omission, and, turning away in a great measure from the proceedings of statesmen and parliaments, to bring before my readers a number of scattered facts, illustrating from different points of view the habits, manners, conditions, and opinions of the different classes of the English people.

Glancing first of all at the upper orders, we shall be at once struck with the immense change which has passed over male attire since the eighteenth century. The contrast of colour between male and female dress which is now so conspicuous then hardly existed; and rank, wealth, and pretension, were still distinctly marked by costly and elaborate attire. Nor was this simply true of the 'bucks,' 'beaux,' 'fribbles,' 'macaronis,' and 'dandies,' who represented in successive periods the extremes or the eccentricities of fashion. The neutral dress scarcely differing in shape or colour which now assimilates all

classes from the peer to the shopkeeper was still unknown, and a mode of attire was in frequent use which survives only in Court dress, in the powdered footmen of a few wealthy houses, in City pageants, in the red coats of the hunting field, and in the gay colouring of military uniforms. The pictures of Reynolds and Gainsborough have made the fashionable attire of their period too familiar to need a detailed description, and it may be abundantly illustrated from contemporary literature. Thus, when Lord Derwentwater mounted the scaffold, he was dressed in scarlet, faced with black velvet and trimmed with gold, a gold-laced waistcoat, and a white feather in his hat. Dr. Cameron went to execution in a light-coloured coat, red waistcoat and breeches, and a new bag wig. One of Selwyn's correspondents describes a well-known highwayman who affected the airs of fashion as going to Tyburn dressed in a blue and gold frock, and wearing a white cockade as an emblem of innocence. Dr. Johnson's usual attire was a full suit of plain brown clothes, with twisted hair buttons of the same colour, black worsted stockings, a large bushy, greyish wig, and silver buckles; but on the night when his play of 'Irene' was first acted he thought it right to appear in the theatre in a scarlet waistcoat with rich gold lace, and a gold-laced hat. Goldsmith went out as a physician in purple silk small-clothes, and with a scarlet roquelaure, a sword, and a gold-headed cane; and he had other suits which were equally conspicuous. Wilkes wrote to his daughter in Paris, in 1770, asking her to beg Baron Holbach to purchase for him scarlet cloth of the finest sort and colour to make a complete suit of clothes, and the most fashionable gold buttons for the whole. He is described, by one of his friends, walking to town from a house which he had taken at Kensington, usually attired either in a scarlet or green suit edged with gold.[1]

In Parliament the variety of colouring easily lent itself to party designation. In the latter years of the Irish Parliament the brilliant uniforms of the Volunteers were conspicuous. In England Fox and his followers wore the buff and blue which

[1] See Angelo's *Reminiscences*, i. 55; *Wilkes's Correspondence* (by Almon); Boswell's *Johnson* (Croker's edition), pp. 61, 203, 269; Jesse's *Life of Selwyn*, i. 354, 355; and several illustrations collected by Mr Forsyth in his *Novels of the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 58, 59.

had been the uniform of Washington. On the other side of the House the dress of the Constitutional Club established in 1789 consisted of a dark blue frock with a broad orange velvet cape, large yellow buttons, and waistcoat and breeches of white kerseymere.[1] The ministers wore their stars and ribands, and North was habitually described in debate as 'the noble Lord with the blue riband.' The general use of Court dress and swords in Parliament died out before the end of the American War,[2] but they were still sometimes worn by a few old members,[3] and by the ministers on great occasions. Wraxall has given a graphic description of the sudden change that took place in the appearance of the House upon the downfall of Lord North's ministry in 1782. 'The Treasury bench as well as the places behind it had been for so many years occupied by Lord North and his friends that it became difficult to recognise them again in their new seats, dispersed over the Opposition benches in greatcoats, frocks, and boots. Mr. Ellis himself appeared for the first time in his life in undress. The ministers, their successors, emerged from their obscure lodgings or from Brooks's, having thrown off their blue and buff uniforms; now ornamented with the appendages of dress, or returning from Court decorated with swords, lace and hair-powder, excited still more astonishment.' Lord Nugent having lately been robbed, among other articles, of a number of laced ruffles, pretended that he saw them on the Treasury bench, and the appearance of Fox and Burke in full Court dress gave a point to the witticism.[4] At one period party spirit ran so high that it was carried even into the ordinary dress of private society. A scarlet waistcoat with gold buttons was well known to indicate an admirer of Pitt, and a buff waistcoat a follower of Fox, and enthusiastic Whig ladies delighted in appearing with foxes' tails as a head-dress.[5]

The professions were clearly marked by distinctions of dress.

[1] *Bland Burges Papers*, p. 126.

[2] Townsend's *History of the House of Commons*, ii. 422.

[3] Wraxall gives the following description of Rigby as he appeared in 1781: 'As if he had meant to show that he acted independently of ministers, he never sat on the Government side of the House. . . . When in his place he was invariably habited in a full-dressed suit of clothes, commonly of a purple or dark colour, without lace or embroidery, close buttoned, with his sword thrust through the pocket.' (Wraxall's *Memoirs*, i. 539, 540.)

[4] Ibid. ii. 167, 168.

[5] *The Lounger*, No. 10 (1785).

'The medical character,' wrote Sir John Hawkins, speaking of a period a little before the middle of the century, 'whatever it is now, was heretofore a grave one. . . . The candidates for practice, though ever so young, found it necessary to add to their endeavours a grave and solemn deportment, even to affectation. The physicians in Hogarth's prints are not caricatures. The full dress with a sword and a great tie wig and the hat under the arm, and the doctors in consultation each smelling to a gold-headed cane shaped like a parish beadle's staff, are pictures of real life in his time; and I myself have seen a young physician thus equipped walk the streets of London without attracting the eyes of passengers.'[1] 'A physician,' said a character in Fielding's 'Mock Doctor,' which was published in 1732, 'can no more practise without a full wig than without a fee.'

In the early half of the century clergymen usually wore their gowns when walking in the streets of London. In the country the distinction was less marked. There were clergymen like the Buck Parson in 'Belinda,' or the squire-in-orders described by Colman in the 'Connoisseur,' or the workhouse chaplain in Crabbe's 'Village,' who almost wholly sank the character of a clergyman in that of a sportsman, and in general the distinction in tastes, habits, and occupations between the country clergyman and the small country gentleman was much less than at present. But, even in the country, till the last quarter of the century, a clergyman rarely appeared abroad without his cassock,[2] and long after wigs had fallen into general disuse they were habitually worn by the leaders of the Law and of the Church. Lord Eldon mentions that, at his wife's request, he applied to the King to be allowed to dispense with his wig when not engaged in official functions, but the King refused the permission, saying he would have no innovations in his time;[3] and a Bishop of London is said to have been refused admission to the royal closet because he had laid it aside. As late as 1850, King Ernest of Hanover wrote to one of his friends some curious and characteristic recollections of his boyhood, when he lived in England as Duke of Cumberland. 'I maintain,' he said, 'that the first change and shock

[1] Hawkins' *Life of Johnson*, p. 238.

[2] Many particulars about clerical dress in the eighteenth century will be found in *Abbey and Overton's English Church in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 469–471.

[3] Twiss's *Life of Eldon*, pp. 339, 340.

in the ecclesiastical habits was the bishops being allowed to lay aside their wigs, their purple coats, short cassocks and stockings, and cocked hats, when appearing in public, for I can remember when Bishop Hurd of Worcester, Courtenay of Exeter, and Markham, Archbishop of York, resided in Kew and its vicinity, that as a boy I met them frequently, walking about dressed as I now tell you, in the fields and walks of the neighbourhood, and their male servants appeared equally all dressed in purple, which was the custom. The present Bishop of Oxford was the first who persuaded George IV. to be allowed to lay aside his wig, because his wife found him better looking without it.' 'Formerly,' writes the same old Tory King, 'all peers when a summons was issued never attended the House but dressed like gentlemen and peers, and not as they do now, like shopkeepers, horse-dealers, and tradesmen, with coloured neckcloths and boots. I remember when no minister came down to the House, having announced a motion, without being full-dressed, with his sword by his side.'[1]

A love of pageantry, greatly in excess of what now prevails, was shown in many other forms. George III. indeed, though extremely tenacious of the royal dignity, was by taste simple and domestic even to a fault; he scarcely ever received at his own table,[2] and the dinner in public at Hampton Court, which had been customary under his predecessors, was no longer held; but it was still the rule for every one to kneel to the King on entering his chamber.[3] A nobleman or a bishop rarely visited a country town except in a carriage drawn by four horses. Travelling, being chiefly by private carriages, was, except in its humblest and most incommodious forms, almost a monopoly of the rich; and at a time when the roads were still infested by highwaymen the many retainers who accompanied a great man on his journey were deemed necessary for his security as well as for his dignity. In this respect the moral and political influence of railways in levelling social distinctions has been very great. The pomp and extravagance of English funerals in all ranks had long been a subject of complaint, and in the case of

[1] Fonblanque's *Lives of the Lords Strangford*, pp. 183, 185.

[2] See Greville's *Journal of the Reign of Queen Victoria*, i. 77.

[3] Jesse, *George III.* ii. 279.

men of high rank and sometimes even of rich tradesmen the custom of lying in state was still retained. Horace Walpole describes how 10,000 people pressed round the coffin of Lady Coventry, and how Lady Milton and Lady Betty Germain stood waiting in the mob in St. James's Square till they could see Lord Macclesfield lie in state.[1]

The position of the aristocracy was a more exceptional one than it now is, though their real power had sensibly diminished since the accession of George III. The war which the King had successfully carried on against the ascendency of the great families that had existed under his two predecessors, the great growth of the popular or democratic element in the Constitution, the lavish creations of North and Pitt, which nearly doubled the peerage without importing into it any proportionate accession of ability, and, finally, the rapid multiplication of commercial fortunes and of fortunes acquired in India, were all in their different ways abridging aristocratic influence. Still, that influence, though almost wholly unsupported by the invidious class privileges which prevailed on the Continent, was enormously great. The peers were the natural heads of that landed interest which it was one of the main objects of English law to make the predominant power in the country. They were the centre of a traditional popular reverence, unmistakable in its power and sincerity. They were a class who devoted themselves from early manhood and with extraordinary advantages to public life, and they not only constituted one House of the Legislature, but largely influenced by their borough patronage the decisions of the other. With the exception of a few eminent lawyers, who were readily welcomed into their ranks, almost all the higher posts of administration were in the hands of noblemen or of men of noble family. The two strongest ministries of the reign of George III. were the ministry of North, which lasted for twelve years, and the ministry of Pitt, which lasted for twenty. In the Cabinet of 1770 North himself and Sir Edward Hawke were the only members who were not in the House of Lords, while Pitt was at first the only commoner in the Cabinet of 1783.[2] The

[1] Walpole to Mann, Nov. 1, 1760; Walpole to Hertford, March 27, 1764. See too Andrews' *Eighteenth Century*, p. 19.

[2] See on this subject, Sir C. Lewis's *Administrations of Great Britain*, pp. 92, 93.

power of the nobility was supported by great wealth of the kind which carries with it most social influence, and by a superiority of education and manners which distinguished them far more than at present from the average country gentleman. It is not surprising, therefore, that the separation between the titled and untitled gentry should have been more marked than in our generation. In 'Humphrey Clinker' the nobleman refuses the satisfaction of a gentleman to the squire on account of the inequality of their ranks, and an attentive reader of the light literature of the time will, I think, be struck with the degree in which the distinction between peer and commoner is accentuated. Wilberforce gives as one of his reasons for not desiring a peerage that it would exclude his children from intimacy with 'private gentlemen of moderate fortunes, and clergymen, and still more, mercantile men.'[1]

In one important respect a certain retrograde movement may be traced. The connection between the English nobility and the trading or commercial classes, which I have already had occasion more than once to notice, seemed to have disappeared. Notwithstanding the great prominence which commercial interests held in the policy of Pitt, and notwithstanding the immense number of the peerages which he created, the dignity of a British peerage was in his ministry scarcely ever conferred on any man whose fortune was made in commercial pursuits. In questions of peerages the royal influence is always extremely great, and 'through his whole reign,' it has been said, 'George the Third adopted as a fixed principle that no individual engaged in trade, however ample might be his nominal fortune, should be created a British peer.'[2] 'At no period in the history of

[1] Wilberforce's *Life*, i. 392.

[2] Wraxall, *Posthumous Mems.* i. 66. Smith the banker, who was made Lord Carrington, was, Wraxall says, the sole exception. On the old connection between trade and the peerage, see Sir Bernard Burke's *Reminiscences, Ancestral and Historic*, pp. 82–84, 95, 98, 99. See, however, on the other hand, a curious letter of Lord Aberdeen in the *Croker Correspondence*. He says: 'Mr. Pitt has often been reproached for having been too prodigal of peerages, and Lord Carrington's has often been referred to especially, as introducing into the House of Lords a new description of person. I never heard Mr. Pitt speak on this subject himself, but I have heard the late Lord Melville say that Mr. Pitt always defended this creation on principle, and that he maintained the time was come when for the sake of the House of Lords it was desirable that it should not be closed against commercial eminence any more than other well-founded pretensions.' (Croker's *Correspondence*, ii. 302.)

England,' wrote Burke in 1791, 'had so few peers been taken out of trade or from families newly created by commerce. In no period had so small a number of noble families entered into the counting-houses. I can call to mind but one in all England, and his is of near fifty years' standing.'[1]

The space of two long lives is sufficient to bridge the chasm that separates us from a society which would appear as strange to our eyes as the figures of a fancy ball. With the many purely capricious changes or fluctuations of fashion we need not concern ourselves here. The contraction or dilation of the hoops of ladies' dresses; their long trains; the passion for tight-lacing, which was carried so far that Lady Crewe on her return from Ranelagh once rushed up to her bedroom, calling her maid instantly to cut the laces or she would faint; the pyramids of false hair, which rose so high that Rogers recollected driving to Ranelagh with a lady who was compelled to sit on a stool placed on the floor of the carriage; the taste for ornaments made of straw, which, under the patronage of the Duchess of Rutland and a few other great ladies, became general about 1783; the muffs that were carried, and the high heels that were worn by men of fashion; the large gold or amber headed canes of the physician; the many forms of wigs; and the many changes in the shape, size, and trimmings of hats, have been abundantly described by the chroniclers of fashion. There were some changes, however, which fall properly within the province of this book as indicating important revolutions in the habits or relations of classes. Sir John Hawkins, in some interesting notes on those which took place in the forty years that elapsed between the writings of Addison and the appearance of the 'Rambler,' in 1750, mentions especially that during that time the outward distinctions of trades and professions had been steadily fading. The clergyman dressed more like a layman. 'The apron, the badge of mechanic occupations in all its varieties of stuff, was laid aside.' Physicians discarded their great wigs, and assumed what Boswell called the 'levity of bag wigs.' Lawyers ceased to wear black except in the actual exercise of their profession.[2] In the thirty years that followed, wigs passed

[1] 'Thoughts on French Affairs,' *Works*, vii. 24.
[2] Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, p. 261.

out of general use except in the professional classes. In 1765 the perruke-makers presented a curious petition to the King, complaining bitterly of the growing custom of gentlemen wearing their own hair, employing foreigners to dress it, and when they employed natives obliging them to work on the Lord's Day;[1] and they begged the King to discountenance these usages by his example. Some of the perruke-makers who presented this petition had themselves conformed to the custom they reprobated, which so excited the indignation of the mob that they seized them and cut off their hair.[2] About 1780, as I have already had occasion to notice, the custom of wearing swords at social gatherings and in places of public resort began to go out of fashion, and about the same time a very important addition was made to the comfort of life, and especially to that of the less opulent classes, by the general use of the umbrella.

Its history is not without interest. In Queen Anne's time it is mentioned both by Swift and Gay as employed by women,[3] but up to the middle of the eighteenth century it appears never to have been used in England by men, though Wolfe, the future conqueror of Quebec, wrote from Paris in 1752 describing it as in general use in that city, and wondering that so convenient a practice had not yet penetrated to England. Hanway, the famous traveller and philanthropist, who returned to England in 1750, is said to have been the first Englishman who carried an umbrella; and a Scotch footman, named John MacDonald, who had travelled with his master in France and Spain, mentions in his curious autobiography that he brought one to London in 1778 and persisted in carrying it in wet weather, though a jeering crowd followed him, crying, 'Frenchman, why don't you

[1] This was also a complaint of Hannah More. See her *Thoughts on the Manners of the Great*.

[2] *Annual Register*, 1765, p. 64.

[3] 'The tucked-up sempstress walks with hasty strides
While streams run down her oil'd umbrella's sides.' *Tatler*, No. 238.

'Good housewives all the winter's rage despise
Defended by the riding hood's disguise;
Or underneath th' umbrella's oily shed
Safe through the wet on clinking pattens tread.
Let Persian dames th' umbrella's ribs display
To guard their beauties from the sunny ray;
Or sweating slaves support the shady load
When Eastern monarchs show their state abroad;
Britannia's winter only knows its aid
To guard from chilly showers the walking maid.'
Gay's *Trivia*.

get a coach?' In about three months, he says, the annoyance almost ceased, and gradually a few foreigners and then some Englishmen followed his example. Defoe had described an umbrella as one of the contrivances of Robinson Crusoe, and umbrellas were in consequence at one time called 'Robinsons.' They were long looked on as a sign of extreme effeminacy, and they multiplied very slowly. Dr. Jamieson in 1782 is said to have been the first person who used one at Glasgow, and Southey's mother, who was born in 1752, was accustomed to say that she remembered the time when anyone would have been hooted who carried one in the streets of Bristol. A single coarse cotton one was often kept in a coffee-house to be lent out to customers, or in a private house to be taken out with the carriage and held over the heads of ladies as they got in or out; but for many years those who used umbrellas in the streets were exposed to the insults of the mob, and to the persistent and very natural animosity of the hackney coachmen, who bespattered them with mud and lashed them furiously with their whips. But the manifest convenience of the new fashion secured its ultimate triumph, and before the close of the century umbrellas had passed into general use.[1]

In the last years of the century the inventions of Arkwright and Crompton were effecting a complete transformation in female dress, and greatly modifying the dress of men.[2] The costly silks which had hitherto been so prominent in the ordinary attire of the upper classes almost disappeared; woollens greatly diminished, and the cottons, muslins, and calicoes which were now produced in such cheapness, and with such endless and graceful variety, came into general use. And while these great inventions were changing and simplifying English dress and almost obliterating the external distinction of classes, a great wave of fashion in France was moving in the direction of a republican simplicity. It had its origin chiefly in the admiration for the Americans and in the influence of Rousseau, and we

[1] Sangster on Umbrellas; Roberts's *Social History of the Southern Counties*, p. 560; Southey's *Commonplace Book*, i. 574; Pugh's *Life of Hanway*, p. 221; John MacDonald's *Life and Travels* (1790), pp. 282, 283. Several particulars about the use of umbrellas will be found in the valuable collections relating to public manners made by Francis Place. (British Museum, Add. MSS. 27, 827.)

[2] Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iv. 81.

may soon trace its imitation or its counterpart in England. Wraxall, who was a keen observer of such matters, attributes it largely to the example of Fox. In early life this statesman had been a typical man of fashion, and there is a curious description of him in an old magazine as he appeared as a young man, with 'his *chapeau bras*, his red-heeled shoes, and his blue hair-powder;' but during the American War he gave another turn to the prevailing fashion. 'Mr. Fox,' says Wraxall, 'and his friends, who might be said to dictate to the town, affecting a style of neglect about their persons, and manifesting a contempt for all the usages hitherto established, first threw a sort of discredit on dress. From the House of Commons and the clubs in St. James's Street it spread through the private assemblies of London. But though gradually undermined and insensibly perishing of an atrophy, dress never totally fell till the era of Jacobinism and of Equality in 1793 and 1794.'[1] This period indeed marks a complete revolution in English dress. It was then that the picturesque cocked hat went out of fashion and was replaced by the tall hat, limp indeed, and coloured, but of the same ungraceful shape as that which now prevails.[2] Then, too, the silver buckle was exchanged for the ordinary shoe tie. Muslin cravats, pantaloons, and Hessian boots came into fashion, and the mode of dressing the hair was wholly changed. Like the Roundheads of the seventeenth century the democrats of the eighteenth century adopted the fashion of cutting the hair short, and they also discarded as inconsistent with republican simplicity that hair-powder which, since the abolition of wigs, had been invariably worn by the upper classes. It is interesting to notice that, among the young students at Oxford who were foremost in taking this step, were Southey and Savage Landor.[3] But the new fashion would hardly have prevailed so quickly had it not been supported by other influences. Pitt's tax upon hair-powder, which was imposed in 1795, had a considerable effect. It contained, indeed, a long and curious list of exemptions, which shows how completely the use of hair-powder

[1] Wraxall's *Memoirs*, i. 135.

[2] Fairholt's *History of Costume*, p. 398; Ashton's *Old Times*, p. 56. The shape, however, had more than once been worn in much earlier periods. It may be seen, among other pictures, in Rembrandt's *Night Watch*.

[3] Forster's *Life of Savage Landor*, i. 47, 48.

was then looked upon as a social necessity. In addition to the royal family and their servants, clergymen not possessing 100*l.* a year, subalterns in the army, and officers in the navy under the rank of masters and commanders were exempted, and in private families all daughters except the two eldest.[1]

The tax was a guinea a head, and it was expected to produce 210,000*l.* a year, but it was soon very generally evaded. Many, through the pressure of economy, gave up the use of powder. A few great Whig families, and among them the House of Russell, discarded it as a protest against the French War, which the tax contributed to support;[2] and when corn rose shortly after the outbreak of the war almost to famine price, most men deemed it a matter of charity and patriotism to prevent a large and useless expenditure of flour. Hair-powder was abandoned at court, and in a short time it totally disappeared from fashionable attire.[3]

From this time English male dress assumed substantially its modern aspect, though the love of bright and contrasted colours was not immediately replaced by the Puritan sobriety which now prevails.[4] Like all great changes of fashion, this was not effected without producing some severe temporary distress,[5] and if it has added considerably to the simplicity and inexpensiveness of life, if it has diminished or destroyed a great sphere of vanity and weakness, it will hardly, I suppose, be denied that the world has lost something by the total banishment of all ideas of beauty and grace from one great department of human things. Wraxall, in a book which was published in 1815, declared that the two preceding centuries had scarcely produced a greater alteration in respect to dress, etiquette, and form, than the last

[1] *Ann. Reg.* 1795, p. 179.

[2] See Ashton's *Old Times*, p. 61.

[3] Full particulars about the abandonment of hair-powder will be found in Fairholt's *History of Costume*; Ashton's *Old Times; Pictorial History*, vii. 760, 761.

[4] See the interesting remarks of Mr. Mozeley, *Reminiscences of Towns and Villages*, i. 414.

[5] Thus a pamphleteer in 1798 writes: 'The whole tribe of stay-makers must now be in extreme distress because the female sex have thought proper to throw off their bodice. The silk and stuff weavers must be equally wretched from the universal wear of linen and muslin; the buckle-makers can be little less embarrassed from the general adoption of leather shoe-strings, and the unfortunate corps of hair-dressers are consigned to misery and despair by the new generation of round-heads.'—*Essay on the Political Circumstances of Ireland under Lord Camden*, pp. 89, 90.

forty years, and that a costume which, at the end of that period, was confined to the Levee and Drawing-room, was in the beginning of it worn 'by persons of condition, with few exceptions, everywhere and every day.'[1]

The growing simplicity of English dress must not, however, be regarded as any index of the decline of luxury. Wealth had been increasing with great rapidity to the eve of the American War, and though English prosperity was then for a time severely checked, a rapid revival took place during the Administration of Pitt. The political importance which the Indian Nabobs obtained may have perhaps produced some exaggeration of their social weight, but it is impossible not to be struck with the great and baneful influence which was constantly ascribed to them. I have already quoted the eloquent sentences in which Chatham deplored the sudden influx of Asiatic wealth, which not being 'the regular natural produce of labour and industry' was bringing in its train Asiatic luxury as well as Asiatic principles of government. Burke looked upon the invasion with at least equal alarm. Voltaire, in a letter to Chesterfield written about 1772, expressed his belief that Indian wealth had so corrupted England that she had now entered upon her period of decadence,[2] and Horne Tooke, as we are told by his biographer, 'observed of English manners that they had not changed by degrees, but all of a sudden; and he attributed it chiefly to our connection with India that luxury and corruption had flowed in, not as in Greece like a gentle rivulet, but after the manner of a torrent.'[3]

The prevailing types of amusement had not very materially changed since the first half of the century. Ranelagh and Vauxhall still retained their popularity, but not their position, for formidable rivals were drawing away the upper classes. Almack's Rooms were opened in 1765, a subscription of ten

[1] Wraxall's *Mems.* i. 135. Some curious particulars of the way in which the ordinary dresses of fashionable life in one generation were utilised for the theatre in the next will be found in Tate Wilkinson's *Memoirs* (1790), iv. 86–88. He says: 'Thirty years ago not a Templar or decent dressed young man but wore a rich gold-laced hat and scarlet waistcoat with a broad gold lace . . . also laced frocks for morning dress,' and he mentions that his actors still occasionally wore, 'for old characters of wealth, a suit of purple cloth with gold vellum holes that I frequently wore when a young man as a fashionable dress.'—Tate Wilkinson's *Memoirs*, iv. 87, 88.

[2] *Annual Register*, 1773, p. 217.

[3] Stephens's *Life of Horne Tooke*, ii. 488.

guineas entitling the members to a weekly ball and supper for twelve weeks, but their real attraction was the deep play, of which they soon became the special centre.[1] Nearly at the same time, Madame Cornelys, a foreign singer,[2] who was described by Walpole as the 'Heidegger of her age,' opened a social club called 'The Society,' at Carlisle House in Soho Square; and her assemblies, her subscription balls, her 'harmonic concerts,' and above all, her masquerades, for a few years attained the wildest popularity. Masquerades were constantly spoken of as one of the chief demoralising influences of the time, and Horace Walpole mentions one which so emptied the House of Commons as to produce an adjournment. The taste, however, like many others, fell as suddenly as it had arisen, and the brilliant manager, who had for some years chiefly provided the fashionable amusements in London, ended her days in the Fleet Prison. The Pantheon, a splendid assembly room intended as a winter Ranelagh, was opened in Oxford Street in 1770. It was the first great work of James Wyatt, and it for a time enjoyed much popularity. Gibbon mentions a subscription masquerade there which cost the subscribers no less than 5,000*l.*, but a few years later the taste diminished, and the Pantheon was converted into an ordinary concert room and theatre.[3]

In 1764, by the King's order, the immemorial custom of playing hazard on Twelfth Night at Court was discontinued, and the King afterwards issued strict orders that no gaming was to be allowed in the royal palaces.[4] But, in spite of royal precept and example, and in spite also of a number of laws which had in the preceding reign been enacted against gaming,[5] there was as yet little or no diminution of this passion. Charles Fox once said that the highest play he had ever known was between 1772 and the outbreak of the American War,[6] and the statement seems to be corroborated by Horace Walpole.[7] About 1780

[1] Jesse's *Life of Selwyn*, i. 360, 366.

[2] She is called so by Walpole. She is said, however, in Edwards's *Anecdotes of Painting*, p. 69, to have been by birth an Irishwoman.

[3] Walpole to Mann, ii. 82–84, 96, 97, 133, 134, 149; *Ann. Reg.* 1771, pp. 139, 140; see too Miss Burney's *Evelina; Ashton's Old Times*, pp. 217–224; Angelo's *Reminiscences*, i. 88–97.

[4] Jesse's *George III.* i. 245. *Correspondence of George III. and Lord North*, i. 237, 238.

[5] For a summary of the many laws against gaming, see *Blackstone*, book iv. chap. 13, § 8.

[6] See a note to Croker's *Boswell* p. 501.

[7] *Letters to Mann* ii. 283.

faro superseded loo as the popular game, and, although it was one of those which a law of George II. had distinctly specified as illegal, it was notoriously carried on at the houses of several ladies of the first position in society. In 1796 Chief Justice Kenyon delivered a charge in which he dwelt on this scandal and threatened to send even the first ladies of the land to the pillory if they were convicted before him, and Gillray caricatured three of the most conspicuous of the offenders as 'Faro's daughters' standing in the pillory. In the following year Lady Buckinghamshire and two other ladies of position were, in fact, condemned, not, indeed, to the pillory, but to pay fifty pounds each for illegal gambling. It was proved that they had gaming parties by rotation in each other's houses, and sat gambling till three or four in the morning.[1] Private lotteries had been already condemned by law, but public lotteries were still annually instituted by authority of Parliament. They gave rise to a multitude of frauds and abuses, and to a great additional system of gambling in the form of an insurance of undrawn tickets, and the Corporation of London in 1773 presented a petition to the House of Commons praying for their suppression. Such a measure found little or no support, but a law was passed in 1778 which put an end to some of their abuses, and reduced the number of dealers in lottery tickets in England to fifty-one. In the previous year there had been more than four hundred lottery offices in London and its neighbourhood alone.[2]

The growing lateness of the hours, which we have noticed during the first sixty years of the century, still continued. In the country, it is true, the fox-hunter was already in his saddle at break of day, and at the universities it was not until the last quarter of the century that the old dinner hour of twelve was abandoned;[3] but the House of Commons during the reign of George III., and especially during the American debates, sat later than it had ever done before,[4] and Horace Walpole, when an old man, complained bitterly of the difficulty he found

[1] See Ashton's *Old Times*, pp. 166–182.

[2] 18 *George III.* c. 22; Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iii. 620; Adolphus, iv. 211–213.

[3] Bishop Watson's *Anecdotes of his Life*, i. 35; Gilbert Wakefield's *Life*, i. 153.

[4] Townsend's *Hist. of the House of Commons*, ii. 380, 382–389; *Correspondence of George III. and Lord North*, i. 281.

in adapting his habits to the increased lateness of London hours. 'Everything,' he wrote in 1777, 'is changed. . . . I do not like dining at nearly six, nor beginning the evening at ten at night. If one does not conform one must live alone.' 'The present folly is late hours. Everybody tries to be particular by being too late. . . . It is the fashion now to go to Ranelagh two hours after it is over. You may not believe it, but it is literal. The music ends at ten; the company go at twelve. Lord Derby's cook lately gave him warning. The man owned he liked his place, but said he should be killed by dressing suppers at three in the morning.'[1] Among the minor social habits which may be noticed was the introduction from France about 1770 of the custom of visiting not in person, but by cards;[2] and a great increase of lounging rides on horseback. Burke noticed the latter as a serious check to economy among the gentry. 'Few beside elder brothers,' he added, 'ever thought of riding in the middle of the day, except on particular occasions, till within the last thirty years. . . . Men who could have no other object but that of sauntering made more use of their limbs.'[3]

Hard drinking among the upper orders, though it had diminished, was still very common, almost imposed by the social code, practised by men who conducted the affairs of the nation, and countenanced to an extreme degree by the example of the heir to the throne.[4] There were hackney coachmen who derived their chief gains from cruising at late hours through certain quarters of the town for the purpose of picking up drunken gentlemen. They conveyed them to their homes if they were capable of giving their address; and, if not, to certain taverns where it was the custom to secure their property and to put them to bed. In the morning the coachman called to take them home, and was in general handsomely rewarded.[5] Horace Walpole describes a violent quarrel at the Opera, which was due to Lord Cornwallis and Lord Allan having come in

[1] *Letters to Mann*, iii. 7, 30, 112. See too, on the hours of the eighteenth century; Gomme's *Gentleman's Magazine Library, Manners and Customs*, pp. 16, 17.

[2] Walpole's *Last Journals*, ii. 12.

[3] This was noticed by Burke in one of his conversations with Mrs. Crewe.

[4] Some curious particulars about the excessive drinking of the Prince of Wales will be found in the recently published reminiscences of Wraxall.

[5] Walker, *The Original*, p. 41.

drunk and insulted Mr. Rigby in the pit. The memoirs, the correspondence, and the novels of the time are full of illustrations of the prevalence of the vice, and they show also the coarseness and the violence of manners it brought with it, the oaths which were constantly on the lips of men of fashion, the persecutions with which young ladies of beauty and distinction were often pursued in public places, the coarse and stupid practical jokes which were the fashion, and which were especially directed against foreigners.[1] At the same time it is certain that in these respects a great improvement had been already effected, and the decline of drinking in the upper orders both in England and Ireland, though perhaps not in Scotland,[2] is universally admitted. Dr. Johnson, who boasted that he had himself drunk when at college as much as three bottles of port at a sitting without being the worse for it, and who afterwards gave up all wine-drinking on the ground that he found it impossible to drink it in moderation, was accustomed to say that he remembered the time 'when all the decent people of Lichfield got drunk every night and were not the worse thought of;' and he ascribed the change chiefly to the general substitution among the smaller gentry of wine for ale.[3] Lord Shelburne could remember when in some country districts 'several of the best gentlemen, members for the county, drank nothing but beer.'[4] The change to a more expensive beverage naturally diminished drunkenness, but much must also be ascribed to a growing and general refinement. It was noticed that smoking had also decreased in England during the latter half of the eighteenth century, though it speedily revived during the great French War.[5] With the decline of drinking, and also with the increased comfort of home life, taverns had in a great degree lost the place which they had held in the Elizabethan period, and especially at the time of the Restoration, as the centres of social gatherings; but they were still employed much more than in the present day for the transaction of business, and

[1] Many particulars on this subject will be found collected in Mr. Forsyth's admirable little book on *The Novelists of the Eighteenth Century*, a book which has helped me much in the present chapter.

[2] On the great drunkenness in Scotland during the latter half of the eighteenth century, see Chambers's *Traditions of Edinburgh*.

[3] Boswell (Croker's ed.), pp. 282, 578.

[4] Shelburne's *Life*, i. 51.

[5] Boswell's *Johnson*, p. 282.

in the middle of the century more than twenty of them were clustered round the Royal Exchange.[1]

The public fencing-matches with swords, which had grown up in England after the Parliamentary wars, which had been extremely popular under Anne and under George I., and which seldom ended without some effusion of blood, had now almost passed away. The most famous were held in the bear-garden of Hockley in the Hole, but 'assaults of arms' were also common entertainments in taverns and coffee-houses. Figg, who was one of the last great fencing-masters of the eighteenth century, is remembered by a sketch of Hogarth, and the Italian Domenico Angelo as a lover of Peg Woffington, a friend of Sheridan and Garrick, the founder of a school of fencing which has continued to the present day, and the father of a writer who has left not only a classical work on his own art, but also some curious reminiscences of his time.[2] With the decline of fencing the love of boxing increased, and the brutalities of the prize-ring were never more popular than in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Bull-baiting, however, was now but little attended, except by the mob, and it was attacked in Parliament, and very frequently from the pulpit. The bull-running at Tutbury, which is said to have been practised from the days of John of Gaunt, was finally suppressed in 1778 by the Duke of Devonshire in virtue of his office as Steward of Tutbury.[3] The cockpit was patronised chiefly for its association with gambling; but the stream of public sentiment in the centres of fashion was manifestly running against it, though many members of the aristocracy were attached to it, and though it probably flourished as much as ever in country villages and towns. When the King of Denmark visited England in 1768 he was taken to a fox-chase and a cock-fight as typical English amusements.[4] One of the figures in Hogarth's

[1] See an interesting sketch of the history of taverns in Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, pp. 87, 88.

[2] An admirably complete account of these fencing-matches and of all the other matters relating to that art in England will be found in Mr. Egerton Castle's valuable work on *Schools and Masters of Fence* (1885). Angelo, who was a very graceful horseman, sat as a model for the equestrian statue of William III. in Merrion Square, Dublin. A number of extracts from old newspapers relating to the different kinds of prize-fights will be found in the works of Andrews and of Mr. Ashton.

[3] Compare Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes*, pp. 279, 280. Blaine's *Encyclopædia of Rural Sports*, p. 129.

[4] Jesse's *Life of Selwyn*, ii. 328.

picture of a cock-fight commemorates the curious fact that Lord Albemarle Bertie, who was totally blind, was among the most assiduous and enthusiastic devotees of the sport.[1]

Horse-racing was steadily increasing. It was naturally favoured by the improved means of communication, which made it more easy to attend the chief centres, and it does not appear to have been seriously affected by the tax which Pitt imposed in 1784 on every horse that was entered for a race, and on every plate that was won. It was mentioned during the discussion of these taxes that about five hundred plates were annually run for in England.[2] The first three Hanoverian sovereigns did not patronise the race-course as warmly as the Stuarts, but several members of the royal family gambled greatly at Newmarket. The Derby, the Oaks, and the St. Leger were all founded in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and to this period also belong James Layman and George Stubbs, the first considerable English painters of racehorses. Coursing, also, which had long been popular as a form of hunting, appears then, for the first time, to have been treated on a considerable scale as a form of racing or gambling, and the earliest coursing clubs in England seem to have been established in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century.[3] Fox-hunting, which as a separate sport is almost a creation of the eighteenth century, was steadily advancing in its prominence among English field-sports, though the strict preservation of foxes was not yet common.[4]

[1] Nicholl's *Memoirs of Hogarth*, p. 368. 'The following instance,' writes Blanco White, 'will show you to what degree the passion for bull fights can grow. A gentleman of my acquaintance had some years ago the misfortune to lose his sight. It might be supposed that a blind man would avoid the scene of his former enjoyment, a scene where everything is addressed to the eye. This gentleman, however, is a constant attendant at the amphitheatre. . . . Upon the appearance of every bull he greedily listens to the description of the animal and of all that takes place in the fight. His mental conception of the exhibition, aided by the well-known cries of the multitude, is so vivid that when a burst of applause allows his attendant just to hint at the event that drew it from the spectators, the unfortunate man's face gleams with pleasure, and he echoes the last clappings of the circus.'—Doblado's *Letters from Spain*, pp. 158, 159.

[2] See the curious debate on the subject, *Parl. Hist.* xxiv. 1251, 1252

[3] See Blaine's *Encyclopædia o Rural Sports*, pp. 584–586. Lord Wilton's *English Sports in their Relation to English Character*, pp. 165–175.

[4] Thus Campbell in a book published in 1774 wrote: 'The fox . . . is not only pursued by dogs for sport, but destroyed everywhere and by every method that can be devised.'—*Political Survey of Great Britain*, ii. 208. Arthur Young complains that hares were some imes so numerous

The new passion for sea-side watering-places produced a new form of amusement in the regatta which was first introduced from Venice in 1775.[1]

The latter half of the eighteenth century may be regarded as the golden age of the English theatre. It saw Garrick, Macklin, and Barry in their prime; it witnessed the splendid rise of John Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, as well as the lighter graces of Miss Farren, Mrs. Jordan, and Mrs. Abingdon, and at a time when the great Shakspearian revival was at its height, it also produced the plays of Goldsmith, Sheridan, Foote, and Home. There was an incontestable improvement in the moral tendency, and still more in the refinement of the theatre, and it was noticed that a coarseness which excited no reprobation under George I. was no longer tolerated on the stage.[2] The revolt of popular feeling against the legislative discouragement of the theatre had now become very marked. A statute of Anne had placed all actors in the category of 'rogues and vagabonds,'[3] but the Licensing Act of 1737 had restricted this stigma to those who acted without authority by patent from the King, or license from the Lord Chamberlain.[4] The same Act, besides imposing a censorship on plays, had provided that neither the Crown nor the Lord Chamberlain should have any power to authorise theatrical performances for money in any part of Great Britain, except in the city of Westminster and in places where the King was residing, and there only during the period of his residence. But this grave encroachment on the liberties of the people ran violently counter to public opinion, and this part of the law appears to have been almost wholly inoperative. In the very curious memoirs of Tate Wilkinson, who was one of the most active provincial managers and actors of his time, we have abundant evidence that the old theatres in provincial towns were not suppressed, that new theatres were opened, and that in the last days of George II. and the early years of George III. there was scarcely a second-rate town in England in which dramatic entertainments were not publicly performed, sometimes by local

as to be very injurious to husbandry in England, otherwise he makes no complaint of excessive game preservation.—*Political Arithmetic*, p. 205.

[1] *Ann. Register*, 1775, p. 216.

[2] See Wraxall's *Post. Mems.* iii. 49.

[3] 12 Anne, stat. 2, c. 23.

[4] 10 Geo. II. c. 28.

actors, sometimes by actors from London or Dublin. There was a company at Portsmouth, which performed also regularly at Plymouth and Exeter. There was the Bath Company, which sometimes visited Winchester and the Isle of Wight. There was the Yorkshire Company, which made its rounds through the northern towns;[1] and even Edinburgh, in spite of the violence of Scotch Presbyterianism, had a considerable place in theatrical history. Plays were for many years acted there by itinerant companies in the Tailors' Hall in the Cowgate, and in 1746 a theatre was opened in the Canongate, though, as the historian of the Scotch theatre truly says, without the sanction of the law, and in defiance of an Act of Parliament. Foote acted at Edinburgh in 1759, and three years earlier, Home, though himself a Presbyterian minister, had scandalised his brethren by bringing out his 'Douglas' on the boards of the Canongate theatre.[2]

Soon the policy was adopted of passing special Acts of Parliament enabling the Crown to authorise Theatres Royal in provincial towns. A theatre was thus patented at Edinburgh in 1767, at Bath and at Norwich in 1768, at York and at Hull in 1769, at Liverpool in 1771, at Manchester in 1775, at Chester in 1777, at Bristol in 1778. A Bill for licensing a theatre at Birmingham was thrown out in 1777, after a debate which supplies some curious illustrations of the open manner in which the prohibitory clause of the Act of 1737 was disregarded. The petition came from the manager of a theatre already existing in the town, and it was urged in opposition to it that it had no considerable popular support; that, with the exception of one period of three years, during which, on account of some grave abuses, actors had been banished, there had been for many years an abundance of theatrical representations in Birmingham; that two unlicensed theatres had been very recently opened, and that a pernicious system existed in the town of obliging workmen to take tickets for the theatre instead of wages. Under these circumstances, the House thought that no licensed theatre was

[1] Tate Wilkinson's *Memoirs*, i. 210, 221, ii. 227. See too the same writer's *Wandering Patentees, or History of the Yorkshire Theatres*; Warner's *History of Bath*, p. 364.

[2] Jackson's *History of the Scottish Stage*, p. 25; Wilkinson's *Memoirs*, ii. 73, 74; Chambers's *Traditions of Edinburgh*, pp. 322–324. In 1764 Wilkinson was asked to act at a new theatre which had just been finished at Glasgow, *Memoirs*, iii. 223.

required, and it does not appear to have been much moved by the incontestable truth of the remark of Wilkes, that during all the many years in which the Birmingham magistrates had permitted unlicensed players to perform, they had been of their own authority suspending the law of the land—the very offence for which James II. had been driven from the throne.[1]

In 1788 a new system was introduced, by an Act authorising magistrates under certain restrictions to license theatrical performances.[2] London actors had already begun to make annual tours through the provinces. At first the badness of the roads, the jealousy of the provincial companies, and the notion of their own dignity had deterred them, and Tate Wilkinson claims to have been the first actor from London who had explored the country playhouses. When, however, he published his memoirs in 1790, he noticed that 'almost every theatrical star now deigned to shine in all the principal theatres of the three kingdoms,' and that Mrs. Siddons, Mrs. Jordan, and other leading actors made their true golden harvest in their summer excursions out of the metropolis.[3] He has also noticed the remarkable fact that in matters of decency and morals the London actors found their audiences in the provinces much more severe or fastidious than those in the metropolis.[4] In the meantime great improvements were taking place in the London theatres in the widening of the stage, in the beauty of the dresses, in the variety and appropriateness of the scenery. One play, it was said, in 1790 cost as much to put on the stage as three plays fifty years before.[5] The opera retained its full popularity, and this period is especially remarkable in the history of domestic music for the introduction of the pianoforte. This instrument—the source of

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xix. 198-205. Another curious discussion on the state of theatres will be found in *Parl. Hist.* xviii. 632-643.

[2] 28 *George III.* c. 30.

[3] Tate Wilkinson's *Memoirs*, ii. 164, iv. 94, 95.

[4] 'A farce, if it possesses true humour, in London will be greatly relished and applauded; in the country, very possibly, the same (even decently acted) will be termed vile, low, vulgar, and indelicate. The *Love for Love* of Congreve, the *Trip to Scarborough*, the *Way of the World*, the *Confederacy*, and others, are in London attended to as plays of wit and merit (witness their constant repetition), but in the country not permitted, or if permitted to appear, not upon any account fashionable, which is just as bad.'—Wilkinson's *Mems.* iii. 119.

[5] See numerous particulars of the changes in the London theatres in *The Mirror*, a treatise appended to the fourth volume of Tate Wilkinson's *Memoirs*.

much pleasure and of much annoyance—grew out of the harpsichord; it appears according to the best accounts to have been invented by Cristofoli of Padua about 1711; but it advanced slowly into note, and no pianoforte seems to have existed in England till the middle of the century. It first became generally known by being brought on the stage at Covent Garden in 1767; in the last twenty years of the century it became common in the orchestras of the English theatres, and it gradually crept into most of the houses of the upper classes.[1]

In the history of English painting the latter half of the eighteenth century is also a period of capital importance. The complete absence of institutions for the instruction of art students, and the utter indifference shown both by the Court and the aristocracy towards native art, had made the preceding half-century one of the most dreary periods of English art history, and native artists would have often found it scarcely possible to subsist if they had not found a wide, though very humble, field of employment in the innumerable signboards which still distinguished the London shops.[2] Towards the close of this period, it is true, the great genius of Hogarth succeeded in winning him a competence, but this was mainly due to the popularity of his prints. The prices given for his greatest pictures are a significant illustration of the prevailing taste. In 1745 he sold no less than nineteen of the most celebrated, including 'The Harlot's Progress,' 'The Rake's Progress,' 'The Strolling Players,' and 'The Four Times of Day,' for four hundred and twenty-seven guineas and seven shillings. Five years later he sold the six great pictures of 'Mariage à la Mode' for one hundred and twenty guineas, though the frames had cost him more than a fifth of that sum. The 'March to Finchley' was disposed of by a raffle. The four election pictures he endeavoured to dispose of in the same way, but the subscriptions proved miserably insufficient, and Garrick showed a real generosity in giving two hundred guineas for these pictures, which were resold in 1823 for sixteen hundred and fifty.[3]

[1] Rimbault's *Hist. of the Pianoforte*, pp. 133, 139.

[2] See vol. i. pp. 526, 527. See too, on the number of good artists who painted sign-boards, *Annual Register*, 1770, pp. 181–186; Smith's *Nollekens and his Times*, i. 25–27.

[3] Nicholl's *Life of Hogarth*, pp. 44, 279–281; Pye's *Patronage of British Art*, pp. 149–151.

There were soon, however, some faint signs that the long night was breaking, and that a real interest in art, and even in native art, was arising. Rouquet, an enamel painter, who had lived in London for thirty years, published in 1755 an account of the state of art in England, and while deploring its miserable condition, and the almost exclusive and undiscriminating patronage of foreign works, he added that during the preceding twenty or thirty years auction rooms for pictures had been greatly multiplying, and the interest in art sales increasing. The Society for the Encouragement of Arts and Manufactures, which was established in 1754, distributed considerable sums in prizes to native artists, and under its auspices annual exhibitions of pictures began in 1760. This society was chiefly founded by the exertions of a private gentleman named Shipley, after the model of the similar society which had been established in Dublin by Dr. Madden; and with the exception of a grant of 500*l.* from the corporation of London it was entirely supported by private subscriptions. Something was done for English artists by the Dilettante Society; by the liberal patronage of Drummond, Archbishop of York, and especially by the Duke of Richmond, who opened a school and gallery for art instruction in his own house, and placed the Florentine painter, Cipriani, at the head of it. A 'Society of Artists of Great Britain' was established in 1761, and was incorporated by royal charter in 1765; and Reynolds, Gainsborough, Wilson, and West had already emerged into notice. The first great artist, who had returned from Italy in 1752, rose in a few years to wealth and fame. He had not, indeed, the power, the imagination, or the perfect knowledge of the human frame that characterised the greatest masters on the Continent; his occasional excursions into historical and sacred art produced little of enduring value, and even in his own lifetime the fugitive character of his exquisite but too superficial colouring was plainly seen; but his children had scarcely been surpassed in art since Raphael and Correggio, and no portrait painter since Vandyke had delineated the nobler and more refined types of adult beauty with a more perfect dignity and grace. The foundation of the Royal Academy under his presidency in 1768 is as important an event in the history of British art as the foundation of the Royal Society a century

earlier had been in the history of British science. The portraits of Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Romney; the landscapes of Gainsborough, Wilson, and Barrett, and the historical pictures of West, Barry, and Copley at once gave England a high place in the art history of the eighteenth century, while the lectures of Reynolds and the annual exhibitions of the Academy immensely widened the area of art interest.

The progress of art owed very little to the patronage of the Court. It was noticed that in the first eight years of his reign, though the King saw a succession of the finest pictures of Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Wilson at the autumn exhibitions, he did not give a single commission to any one of them.[1] He disliked Reynolds, who was on intimate terms with the leading Whigs, and in 1764, when the office of Court painter became vacant by the death of Hogarth, Reynolds was passed over and the post was given to Ramsay. Gainsborough, it is true, was afterwards on several occasions commissioned to paint the King or members of his family, but the painter who was the special object of royal patronage was West. Between 1769 and 1801 he received no less than 34,187*l.* for pictures painted for the King,[2] and Court favour gave him for a time a position among English artists wholly different from that which he holds in the eyes of posterity. The great school of English landscape grew up in spite of extreme neglect. Wilson lived and died in poverty, and though the portraits of Gainsborough were eagerly sought for, his exquisite landscapes were unsold and unappreciated. But the new school of portraiture in England soon drove all foreign rivalry from the field, though the prices given to its greatest representatives would appear strangely moderate if measured by the standard of our own age. Reynolds at first charged ten guineas for his three-quarter-length portraits, twenty guineas for his half-lengths, and forty guineas for his whole-lengths, and these prices were raised in successive periods to fifteen, thirty, and sixty; to twenty-five, fifty, and one hundred; and finally to fifty, one hundred, and two hundred guineas. Gainsborough painted portraits at first at five, and soon after at eight guineas for a head, and he finally settled at forty guineas for a half-length and a hundred guineas for a

[1] Pye's *Patronage of British Art*, p. 110. [2] Ibid. p. 230.

whole-length portrait. Romney, who was for a time looked upon as a formidable rival to Reynolds, is said to have made in his most prosperous days about 4,000*l.* a year from his portraits.[1]

In other forms of art the progress was less marked. In architecture little was done which has elicited the admiration of posterity, though Sir William Chambers, the Brothers Adam, Wyatt, and Robert Taylor had all a great reputation in their generation. Somerset House, which was designed by Chambers, is probably the most imposing work of English architecture in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and this period is distinguished for the number and magnificence of the great country houses that were erected,[2] and also for the first feeble signs of that revival of Gothic architecture which in the nineteenth century became so conspicuous.[3] In European sculpture the star of Canova shone supreme; but England possessed in Bacon, Banks, Nollekens, and above all Flaxman, native artists of incontestable merit. Wedgwood was at the same time producing his beautiful pottery works; Boydell gave a world-wide reputation to British engraving,[4] and there was in all forms a rapid diffusion of artistic taste. It was noticed that before the great popularity of Hogarth's prints, and the Act of 1735 establishing copyright in engravings, there were but two print shops in the whole of London; but after this Act they soon appeared in the most various quarters of the town.[5] Horace Walpole, who was himself an old and intelligent collector, has preserved some curious particulars of the change which had

[1] Edwards' *Anecdotes of British Painting*; Taylor and Northcote's *Life of Reynolds*; Brock-Arnold's *Gainsborough*; Redgrave's *Century of Painters*; Pilkington's *Dictionary of Painters*. Sir G. Elliot wrote in 1789: 'Gainsborough's pictures are selling for 200*l.* to 500*l.* a piece' (*Life of Sir George Elliot*, i. 308). Kneller, who after the death of Lely had a more undivided ascendency than any artist under George III, and who was notorious for his love of money, charged for his portraits fifteen guineas for a head, twenty if with one hand, thirty for a half, and sixty for a whole length (*Annual Register*, 1764, p. 53). Some particulars about the prices of pictures under Queen Anne will be found in Ashton's *Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne*, pp. 279–282.

[2] Mr. Ferguson reckons that at least two hundred great 'manorial mansions' were erected in England and Scotland during the eighteenth century (*History of Modern Architecture*, p. 328). Many particulars relating to them will be found in Dallaway's *Progress of the Arts*.

[3] These beginnings are minutely traced in Sir C. Eastlake's *Revival of Gothic Architecture*.

[4] See Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iv. 183–185.

[5] Pye, pp. 42, 43.

in his own lifetime passed over English taste. 'We have at present,' he wrote in 1770, 'three exhibitions. One West, who paints history in the taste of Poussin, gets 300*l.* for a piece not too large to hang over a chimney. . . . The rage to see these exhibitions is so great that sometimes one cannot pass through the streets where they are. It is incredible what sums are raised by mere exhibitions of anything; a new fashion and to enter at which you pay a shilling or half-a-crown. Another rage is for prints of English portraits. I have been collecting them for about thirty years, and originally never gave for a mezzotinto above one or two shillings. The lowest are now a crown: most from half-a-guinea to a guinea. . . . Scarce heads in books not worth threepence will sell for five guineas. Then we have Etruscan vases made of earthenware in Staffordshire, from two to five guineas, and ormolu, never made here before, which succeeds so well that a tea-kettle, which the inventor offered for one hundred guineas, sold by auction for one hundred and thirty.'[1] The pictures of the old foreign masters had risen in equal proportion. Two thousand pounds were given for a picture of Guido, and the price of old paintings had tripled or quadrupled in a single lifetime.[2]

While the great artistic development was giving a new ply to popular taste in England and attracting to the pursuit of art a rapidly increasing and often an excessive stream of students,[3] there was a corresponding movement in the spheres of literature and science. Whatever controversy there might be about the comparative value of the additions made to human knowledge in the eighteenth and in preceding centuries, there could be no question of the fact that the eighteenth century was pre-eminently the century of the diffusion of knowledge. The great discovery of the lightning conductor by Franklin, as well as his admirable history of electricity, gave an immense popularity to this branch of science,[4] and the marvellous discoveries of the French chemists, the impulse which Buffon had given to the

[1] Walpole's *Letters to Mann*, ii. 97.

[2] Ibid. ii. 235, 273.

[3] 'The swarm of young artists who have been students in the Royal Academy, has overstocked the capital and country so much that I am told many of them are at present in the utmost indigence.'—Twining's *Country Clergyman in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 127.

[4] Moritz, a Prussian traveller who visited England in 1782, was much struck with this. See Pinkerton, ii. 518.

study of natural history, and the example of the scientific enthusiasm which ran so high in the world of fashion at Paris had all their influence in England. 'Natural history,' Horace Walpole wrote in 1770, 'is in fashion.'[1] Goldsmith, with the smallest possible knowledge of the subject, found it profitable to place his graceful pen at its service, and his 'Animated Nature' had probably some considerable influence in extending the taste. Dr. Hill, who had been appointed by George III. gardener at Kensington, was one of the first persons who put scientific knowledge in a popular shape by the system of publishing in numbers. Walpole says he made fifteen guineas a week by working for wholesale dealers, and that he was employed at the same time on six voluminous works on botany, husbandry, &c., which were published weekly.[2] The many popular scientific works of Priestley greatly assisted the movement. A taste for public lectures now sprang up, and a great literature of compilations arose. The 'Encyclopædia Britannica,' which was completed in 1797, though far inferior in genius and influence to the corresponding work in Paris, was incomparably superior to any similar work which had appeared in England, and numerous systematic works were written on particular sciences, alphabetically arranged in the form of dictionaries.[3]

There was still a great want in London of really public libraries accessible to all students. The library belonging to the Chapter of Westminster, the library of Sion College, and the library of Archbishop Tenison,[4] it is true, already existed, and in the course of the century a considerable library was accumulated by the Royal Society; but the British Museum, though rich in manuscripts, was still miserably poor in printed books, and Gibbon complained bitterly that an English writer who undertook to treat any large historical subject was reduced to the necessity of purchasing the books which must form the basis of his work, and that 'the greatest city of the world was still destitute of a public library.'[5] Circulating libraries, however, which have had a great importance in the diffusion of literary

[1] Walpole to Mann, ii. 96.

[2] Walpole to Zouche, Jan. 3, 1761.

[3] See an interesting review of this branch of literature in Miller's *Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century*, iii. 109–116.

[4] Ashton's *Queen Anne*, p. 294.

[5] Edwards' *History of Libraries*, i. 774. See too a speech of Wilkes on the state of libraries in England, *Parl. Hist.* xix. 188–192.

tastes, belong especially to the latter half of the eighteenth century. The exact date of their origin is disputed, but they certainly existed a few years before the middle of the century, and in its last thirty years they multiplied rapidly, not only in London, but in the provincial towns. In 1800 it is stated that there were not less than a thousand circulating libraries in Great Britain.[1] Book clubs and societies were at the same time formed. All important controversies became in their style and method more popular, and a vast literature of novels sprang into existence, at once producing and representing a greatly increased love of reading.

Much attention was also paid to children's literature. Very few books in any age or country have exercised so great an empire over the tastes and sympathies of many successive generations of boys as 'Robinson Crusoe,' which was published in 1719, or as 'Sandford and Merton,' which was published in instalments between 1783 and 1789, and it was in the eighteenth century that the fairy visions of the 'Arabian Nights' were first thrown open to the English imagination. Nor should we forget the many books for little children which were published shortly after the middle of the century by Newberry, Griffith Jones and his brother. 'Goody Two Shoes,' 'Giles Gingerbread,' 'Tommy Trip,' and a crowd of other little masterpieces, combining in different degrees amusement and instruction, replaced the rude chapbooks which had formerly been hawked about and were the forerunners and the models of a vast literature which is not one of the least characteristic and important products of the nineteenth century.[2]

The blue-stocking clubs, which were so popular about 1781, were signs of the desire of ladies of fashion to give a more serious and literary character to female society, and the admirable letters of Lady Mary Montagu, Mrs. Montagu, and Mrs. Delany show the high level of intelligence to which they sometimes attained. The unprecedented multiplication of

[1] See Miller's *Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century*, iii. 304; Buckle's *History of Civilisation*, i. 392, 393; Forsyth's *Novels of the Eighteenth Century*, p. 156; *Annual Register*, 1761, p. 207.

[2] Much information relating to Newberry and his publications has lately been collected by Mr. Charles Welsh in his *Bookseller of the Last Century*.

female authors was a significant feature of the time. It reflected that steady improvement of female education which had been in progress through the century, and it had a great influence in banishing coarseness from English literature, in stimulating those branches of it which are most in harmony with female aptitudes and tastes, and in destroying the foolish prejudice which had long treated serious studies as unbecoming in a woman. Of the female literature of the eighteenth century, it is true, very little remains. The history of Mrs. Macaulay, which Walpole classed with the histories of Robertson, and which Madame Roland pronounced to be hardly inferior to Tacitus, has long since sunk into a darkness as black as that which covers the equally famous 'Botanic Garden' of Darwin, and the still more popular 'Meditations' of Hervey. Few modern readers turn the pages of Hannah More, Charlotte Smith, Mrs. Radcliffe, Miss Seward, Mrs Chapone, Mrs. Trimmer, or the learned Mrs. Carter; and the beautiful lines of Mrs. Barbauld, which still linger in the memory of thousands, were written in extreme old age and long after the century had closed. Some of these writers played a useful, though subordinate and ephemeral, part in the great religious and educational movements of their time. Others were in their day deservedly popular novelists; but they have been displaced by changing tastes and by the ever increasing throng of their successors. The 'Rights of Woman' of Mary Wollstonecroft, however, still retains some historic interest as perhaps the first English example of a class of literature and speculation which has since become very prominent. The 'Evelina' of Miss Burney will long be read as the most faithful picture of the fashionable amusements of its generation; and in Maria Edgeworth the last years of the century produced a novelist who may be justly placed in the same high rank as Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot.

The manners of the gentry all over the country were steadily and rapidly assimilating. The distinction between the nobility and the other gentry, and the immense distinction between town and country were both diminishing. In the middle of the eighteenth century there were still thousands of country gentlemen who had scarcely ever been farther from their homes than their county town, while among the poor the habits of

life had been for generations almost unchanged. Among them at least there was as yet no religious scepticism, no political agitation, no class antagonism, scarcely any curiosity about the outer world, and, until sixty or seventy years of the century had passed, singularly little social or economical change. The standard of material well-being was on the whole high and steady, and life glided on smoothly and uneventfully amid the same landmarks. It was common in country districts for a Sunday suit to descend from father to son. It was put on when the church bell rang and carefully put aside when the service had concluded, and in this way dresses of far bygone generations were still in actual use. Many years after the middle of the eighteenth century, it was stated that beaver hats made in the reign of Charles II. might be often seen in the village churches.[1] The reprobation, half prejudice, half duty, with which all prolonged visits of a country gentleman to the metropolis were regarded had once been one of the strongest of English feelings. It may be seen in the laws against the increase of London; in the early opposition to stage coaches; in the apprehensions which no less a man than Swift expressed of the social evils that would result from annual meetings of Parliament. But with the improvement of roads and public conveyances the whole type of country life was rapidly changing. The weekly stage coach now brought down the latest London fashions to the remote country village. An annual visit to London or to a seaside watering-place became the ambition of every county family. London actors appeared in the neighbouring county town. Provincial circulating libraries brought down London books, and the provincial press was year by year rising in importance. Before the close of the eighteenth century there were already more than seventy provincial newspapers in England.[2]

We have already seen the signs of this change in the first half of the century, and as early as 1761 a writer has given a vivid picture of its progress. 'It is scarce half a century ago,' he says, 'since the inhabitants of the distant counties were regarded as a species almost as different from those of the metropolis as the natives of the Cape of Good Hope. Their

[1] *Annual Register*, 1769, p. 112.
[2] Andrews' *History of British Journalism*, i. 271.

manners as well as dialect were entirely provincial, and their dress no more resembled the habit of the town than the Turkish or Chinese. . . . A journey into the country was then considered almost as great an undertaking as a voyage to the Indies. The old family coach was sure to be stowed, according to Vanbrugh's admirable description of it, with all sorts of luggage and provisions, and perhaps in the course of the journey a whole village, together with their teams, were called in aid to dig the heavy vehicle out of the clay. . . . But now the amendments of the roads with the many other improvements of travelling have opened a new communication between the several parts of our island. . . . Stage coaches, machines, flys, and post-chaises are ready to transport passengers to and fro between the metropolis and the most distant parts of the kingdom. . . . The manners, fashions, amusements, vices and follies of the metropolis now make their way to the remotest corners of the land; . . . the notions of splendour, luxury, and amusement that prevail in town are eagerly adopted; the various changes of the fashions exactly copied, and the whole manner of life studiously imitated. . . . We are no longer encountered with hearty slaps on the back, or pressed to make a breakfast on cold meat and strong beer, and in the course of a tour of Great Britain you will not meet either a high-crowned hat or a pair of red stockings. . . . The country ladies are as much devoted to the card-table as are the rest of the sex in London. . . . They have their balls and concerts by subscription, their theatres, their Mall, and sometimes their rural Ranelagh and Vauxhall. The reading female hires her novels from some country circulating library, which consists of about one hundred volumes. The merchant or opulent hardware man has his villa three or four miles distant from the great town where he carries on his business. . . . French cooks are employed, the same wines are drunk, the same gaming practised, the same hours kept, and the same course of life pursued in the country as in town. . . . Every male and female wishes to think and speak, to eat and drink, and dress and live after the manner of people of quality in London.'[1]

The spread of refined and intellectual tastes, and the great diminution among the country gentry of ignorance, coarseness,

[1] *Annual Register*, 1761, pp. 205-208.

drunkenness, and prejudice might at first sight be regarded as an unmixed good, but it must not be forgotten that these things were purchased by the almost absolute disappearance of a class of men who, with some vices and with many weaknesses, have played a useful and memorable part in English life and history. An excellent observer, who wrote about 1792, has noticed that the preceding forty or fifty years had witnessed the total destruction in England of the once common type of the small country squire.

He was an 'independent gentleman of three hundred per annum, who commonly appeared in a plain drab or plush coat, large silver buttons, a jockey cap, and rarely without boots. His travels never exceeded the distance of the county town, and that only at assize and session time or to attend an election. Once a week he commonly dined at the next market town with the attorneys and justices. He went to church regularly, read the weekly journal, settled the parochial disputes between the parish officers at the vestry, and afterwards adjourned to the neighbouring alehouse, where he usually got drunk for the good of his country. He never played at cards but at Christmas, when a family pack was produced from the mantelpiece. He was commonly followed by a couple of greyhounds and a pointer, and announced his arrival at a neighbour's house by smacking his whip and giving a view-halloo. His drink was generally ale, except on Christmas, the 5th of November, or some other gala-day; when he would make a bowl of strong brandy punch, garnished with a toast and nutmeg. A journey to London was by one of these men reckoned as great an undertaking as is at present a voyage to the East Indies, and undertaken with scarce less precaution and preparation. The mansion of one of these squires was of plaster, striped with timber, not unaptly called callimanco work, or of red-brick; large casemented bow-windows; a porch with seats in it and over it a study; the eaves of the house well inhabited by swallows, and the court set round with hollyhocks; near the gate a horse-block for the conveniency of mounting. The hall was furnished with flitches of bacon and the mantelpiece with guns and fishing-rods of different dimensions, accompanied by the broadsword partisan and dagger borne by his ancestor in the civil wars. The vacant spaces were occupied

by stags' horns. Against the wall was posted King Charles's Golden Rules, Vincent Wing's Almanac, and a portrait of the Duke of Marlborough; in his window lay Baker's "Chronicle," Foxe's "Book of Martyrs," Glanvil on "Apparitions," Quincey's "Dispensatory," "The Complete Justice," and a book of Farriery. In a corner by the fireside stood a large wooden two-armed chair, with a cushion, and within the chimney-corner were a couple of seats. Here at Christmas he entertained his tenants, assembled round a glowing fire made of the roots of trees; and told and heard the traditionary tales of the village, respecting ghosts and witches, while a jorum of ale went round. The best parlour, which was never open but on particular occasions, was furnished with Turk-worked chairs, and hung with portraits of his ancestors; the men in the character of shepherds, with their crooks, dressed in full suits and huge full-bottomed perukes; others, in complete armour, or buff coats, playing on the base-viol or lute. The females likewise, as shepherdesses, with the lamb and crook, all habited in high heads and flowing robes.'[1]

'These men and their houses,' continues the author from whom I am citing, 'are no more.' Everything, indeed, seemed against them. New modes of farming had arisen which the little country gentleman did not understand, and which required a capital he did not possess; and the pressure of taxation grew continually more heavy. 'Lord North's American War,' wrote Bishop Watson, doubtless with some exaggeration, 'rendered it difficult for a man of 500*l.* a year to support the station of a gentleman; and Mr. Pitt's French War has rendered it impossible.'[2] But, above all, the change of manners made his position untenable, and, clinging with great tenacity to his dignity as a gentleman, he found himself exposed to a social competition which he was wholly unable to support. The substitution of wine for beer, the annual visit to London or the seaside, the sudden introduction of town fashions soon plunged him into debt, while the high price he could obtain for his little estate from the large neighbouring landowner became irresistible. A very few, no doubt, of the more enterprising or fortunate of the

[1] Grose's *Olio*, pp. 41–44. [2] Watson's *Anecdotes of His Own Life*, ii. 253.

small country gentlemen succeeded in enlarging their estates. A few others found new paths to wealth in the plains of India, and possibly even in some of the opening fields of manufacturing industry. Others became dependants of great men and obtained places under the Government; but the great majority either sank into tenant farmers or passed into the army, which was soon to draw away an ever-increasing portion of the manhood of England, and for which their hardy country habits made them peculiarly fit.

Of the history of the small proprietors who were simply yeomen, and who farmed their lands without making any pretension to the position of gentlemen, it is difficult to speak with confidence, for the evidence we possess is curiously scanty. Growing extravagance in this class also was tending to their obliteration, and economical causes were acting in the same direction. In the early years of the nineteenth century, however, freehold or copyhold farms might be still found scattered through every county. In parts of Wales, in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Yorkshire, in Shropshire, Essex, and Kent, and in parts of Sussex, Derbyshire, and Gloucestershire they were still very numerous, and there is reason to believe that the immense profits of farming produce during the great French War for a time not only maintained, but in some parts of England considerably increased their number.[1] But the sudden fall of prices at the peace ruined multitudes of small proprietors, many of whom had bought their land at the extravagantly high rate which war prices had produced, and from this time the decay of the class was rapid and almost complete.

English law and custom favouring the agglomeration of land have, no doubt, had some influence, but the main causes may, I think, be found elsewhere. On the one side there is the desire of the large landowner to buy. The social consequence which the possession of a great estate produces; the 'land

[1] Arthur Young noticed in 1807 that this was especially the case in Essex. Thirty-six years before he had found it divided into enormous farms, but during the war it became profitable to divide them and sell them in small lots. The fullest account I have seen of the evidence about the yeomen at the end of the eighteenth century is in an article by Mr. John Rae in the *Contemporary Review*, October 1883. See too the remarks on this subject in that powerful, but one-sided and exaggerated work, Kay's *Social Conditions and Education of the People*, i. 361–367.

hunger' which becomes with some men a passion scarcely less strong than the passion for drink, and the excessive and wholly extravagant preservation of game which has grown up within the present century have all contributed to it; and the increased luxury of country life makes men desire to surround their country places with an increased area of productive land. The innumerable fortunes made in commerce and manufactures have multiplied small country places held for enjoyment, but they have tended powerfully to the extinction both of yeomen and of gentlemen farmers, for they have brought into the market a new class of purchasers who care little for money and much for social position, and who seek to attain the latter by purchasing large quantities of land. The natural tendency also of a very wealthy class is towards investments which offer perfect security and a prospect of improvement, even at the cost of abnormally small present returns; and when the great man of the county wishes to buy, he commonly finds few competitors. It is very doubtful, however, whether the pressure of those who wish to buy has been a stronger influence than the pressure of those who wish to sell. In a great commercial and manufacturing country the owner of a small freehold can almost always increase his income by selling. If he is improvident and falls into difficulties, this is his natural way of extricating himself, and when a provident owner sees his children growing up and knows that he can only provide for one of them on his land, while he can start all of them in life by the proceeds of its sale, he will probably press the great landowner in his neighbourhood to buy, and to allow him to continue in occupation as a tenant. This is, I believe, the experience of most wealthy landlords; and it is to this economical process much more than to any feudal laws that the concentration of land in a few hands has in modern times been due.

The main governing influence of the transformation of manners which has been described in the preceding pages, is to be found in the improvement of roads and of means of locomotion, a subject that meets us at every turn when examining the industrial and social, and even the moral, political, and intellectual history of the eighteenth century. The legislation in England relating to roads has passed through two or three distinct

phases. Originally by common law every parish was obliged to keep the roads that intersected it in good condition, but the first general law on the subject appears to have been that of Philip and Mary, which provided that every parish should annually elect two surveyors and that all the inhabitants should be obliged, under their direction, to provide labourers, carriages, and tools for four days in each year to work upon the roads.[1] With the increase of wealth, however, and consequently of locomotion, this system proved insufficient; and among the many great reforms that were adopted under Charles II. the introduction of turnpikes is not the least memorable. It followed quickly on an important change in the means of locomotion. In the early part of the seventeenth century travelling in England had been mainly on horseback. Horses might be hired on the chief roads at stations about ten miles apart, generally at the charge of from $2\frac{1}{2}d.$ to $3d.$ a mile; but in some counties it was possible to hire a horse for $3d.$ a day and its food. There were also long covered waggons, very slow and tedious, which were employed chiefly by women and by those who were too poor to possess or hire horses, and too weak to travel on foot. About 1640 stage coaches came into use, and they so far superseded the old ways of travelling that a writer in 1672, who was bitterly opposed to them, complained that at that date the saddle-horses bred or kept in England were not a fourth part as numerous as before the new vehicles had begun. He mentions that there were already many stage coaches running in the neighbourhood of London, and that they also connected the metropolis with York, Exeter, Chester, Northampton, Salisbury, Bristol, and Bath.[2]

The improvement in travelling advanced very slowly. The new turnpike roads were extremely unpopular, and fierce mobs —sometimes taking for their rallying cry the words of the prophet, 'Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths'—frequently attacked and destroyed the turnpikes.[3] A

[1] 2 and 3 Philip and Mary, c. 8. Compare the article on Roads in McCulloch's *Account of the British Empire*, and Chalmers' *Estimate*, pp. 30, 31. Chalmers mentions an Act of Edward I. for enlarging the breadth of highways from one market town to another, but it was intended rather to prevent robberies than to facilitate locomotion. Some particular roads were also amended by Acts of Parliament under Henry VIII.

[2] See a curious tract called 'The Grand Concern of England Explained,' *Harleian Miscellany*, viii. 561–571.

[3] *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1749, pp. 376, 377.

law of George II. made this offence a felony, but it is stated that in the middle of the century a traveller seldom saw a turnpike for two hundred miles after leaving the vicinity of London.[1] It was acknowledged that English roads were still greatly inferior to the roads of France and of some other continental countries,[2] and the well-known description which Macaulay has given of their condition in the last years of the seventeenth century might be still applied with little change. The coach from London now arrived at Oxford or at Portsmouth in two days, at York or Exeter in four, at Edinburgh sometimes in three weeks, sometimes in as little as ten days.[3] In winter the journey was much longer than in summer, and in many districts the roads were for long periods impassable. On some of the Sussex roads it was necessary in winter to attach oxen to the carriages. Defoe met a lady near Lewes driven to church in her coach by six oxen, along a road so stiff and deep that no horse could go in it, and he mentions that there were roads in this county of such a character that after heavy winter rains, a whole summer was insufficient to make them passable. Horace Walpole speaks of roads in a similar condition in the immediate neighbourhood of Tunbridge Wells. The antiquary Pennant has left a vivid description of his journey from Chester to London. Six long days were consumed, and sometimes as many as eight horses were required to drag the coach from the slough. Beyond Chester the traveller encountered a far more terrible obstacle in the great crag of Penmaenmaur, which crossed the way to Holyhead, rising more than fifteen hundred feet precipitously from the sea, and it was not till 1772 that Parliament consented to improvements which deprived this part of the main road to Ireland of serious danger.[4] But the last forty years of the

[1] Chalmers' *Estimate*, p. 110.

[2] Ibid. p. 128; *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1749, pp. 218, 219; 1752, pp. 517–520, 552–554.

[3] A number of particulars about the rate of travelling at this time will be found in Southey's *Commonplace Book*, iii. 76, 77, 86, 87; Thrupp's *History of Coaches*, pp. 105, 106; Miller's *Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century*, iii. 320; Andrews' *Eighteenth Century*; Ashton's *Social Life under Queen Anne*; Roberts' *Social History of the Southern Counties*. The most extraordinary instance of rapid communication from the north (doubtless on horseback) is said to have been in 1772, when a great bankruptcy in Edinburgh was known in London forty-three hours after (*Annual Register*, 1772, p. 109).

[4] See Evans' *Beauties of North Wales*, pp. 463–465; Tate Wilkinson's *Memoirs*, i. 152, 153.

eighteenth century produced a great and general revolution in English roads. After the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle many Bills were passed for the formation of turnpike roads, and after the Peace of Paris in 1763 the work was taken up with renewed energy. In the first fourteen sessions of the reign of George III. not fewer than 452 Acts were passed for repairing the highways in different districts.[1]

The improvements, though very great, were for many years only partial. Arthur Young, in his journeys through England, kept a minute record of the state of the roads, and it shows us that though much had been already done, many even of the turnpike roads were in 1768 and 1770 in the most disgraceful state. On the great road from Wigan to Preston, which was one of the most important in the north, he measured ruts which were four feet deep, and 'floating with mud only from a wet summer,' and in a drive of eighteen miles he passed no less than three carts which they had shattered. The turnpike road to Warrington seemed, he said, as if it were made 'with a view to immediate destruction, for the breadth is only sufficient for one carriage, consequently it is cut at once into ruts, and you will easily conceive what a breakdown, dislocating road ruts cut through a pavement must be.' The turnpike to Altringham was 'if possible worse than that to Preston. It is a heavy sand which cuts into such prodigious ruts that a carriage moves with great danger. These sands turn to floods of mud in any season the least wet.' The road to Manchester was 'so narrow that only one carriage can move at a time, and that consequently in a line of ruts.' The turnpike road to Newcastle, he writes, 'is a paved causeway as narrow as can be conceived, and cut into perpetual holes, some of them two feet deep measured on the level. A more dreadful road cannot be imagined, and wherever the country is the least sandy the pavement is discontinued and the ruts and the holes most execrable. I was forced to hire two men at one place to support my chaise from overthrowing in turning out for a cart of goods overthrown and almost buried. Let me persuade all travellers to avoid this terrible country, which must either dislocate their bones with broken pavements or bury them in muddy sand.' Beyond Newcastle to the north

[1] Chalmers' *Estimate*, p. 128.

lay a country in which no wise men would travel except through absolute necessity. 'I would advise all travellers to consider this country as sea, and as soon think of driving into the ocean as venturing into such detestable roads.' 'I am told,' he continues, 'the Derby way to Manchester is good, but further it is not penetrable.' In Essex he describes a road to Tilbury as 'for near twelve miles so narrow that a mouse cannot pass by any carriage;' overshadowed except in a few places by trees that were totally impervious to the sun, and so bad that twenty or thirty horses were sometimes employed to drag the chalk waggons one by one out of the ruts.[1]

In the last quarter of the century these evils were for the most part remedied, and English roads became equal, if not superior, to those of any continental country. The fatigue of travelling in stage-coaches on such roads as have been described may be easily conceived, especially when it is remembered that for many years after the middle of the century stage-coaches had no springs.[2] But the last years of the century produced great improvements in vehicles, the most important being the establishment of the mail-coaches of Palmer in 1784. Previous to this time the post had been sent by the old conveyances, though other and much more rapid ones were running. Thus the diligence to Bath performed the journey from London in seventeen hours, but the post in forty hours, and on other roads there was an equal difference. But the new mail-coaches surpassed all that had preceded them in speed and in comfort, and in 1797 Palmer was able to state before a parliamentary committee that three hundred and eighty towns which had previously had but three posts a week, and forty which had no posts at all, had now daily posts, and that on many roads letters were conveyed in a third or even a fourth of the time which had previously been taken.[3]

Almost every step in the improvement of locomotion in England was taken in the face of considerable opposition. In the

[1] Young's *Northern Tour*, iv. 423–436. Young's *Tour through the South of England and Wales*, pp. 88, 318–320. See, also, on the state of the roads, Tate Wilkinson's *Memoirs*, iii. 142, 143.

[2] Tate Wilkinson's *Memoirs*, iii. 136, 137. See, too, the amusing description of the German traveller Moritz, Pinkerton, ii. 566, 567.

[3] Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iv. 53, 54; *Pictorial History*, vii. 668; *Annual Register*, 1775, p. 191.

beginning of the reign of Charles I. there were not more than twenty hackney-coaches in London, and those who desired them were obliged to send for them to the stables; but in 1635 a proclamation of the King and Council complained that they had so multiplied as to disturb the streets and raise the price of hay and provender, and ordered that no hackney-coach should be suffered in London or Westminster unless it was to travel at least three miles beyond it.[1] The stage-coaches of the Restoration were vehemently assailed as discouraging horsemanship and the breed of horses in England, as drawing the country gentry from their duties to the dissipations of London, and as injuring great numbers of particular industries. The riots against turnpikes almost assumed the dimension of local insurrections; and when the faster stage-coaches were introduced, the old waggoners endeavoured to defeat the competition by systematically driving their broad and heavy waggons-wheels through the ruts made by the stage-coaches so as to make the roads impossible for fast travelling.[2] In 1785 an Act was passed exempting mail-coaches from tolls,[3] but heavy duties both on post-horses and on all public as well as private conveyances hampered communications, and the evil was aggravated by the adoption of the wasteful and almost discredited system of farming-out the duty on post-horses to publicans.[4] But, in spite of all obstacles, the latter years of the eighteenth century witnessed a revolution in the internal communications of England which has only been surpassed by the enormous changes effected in our own century by the agency of steam.

Its effects were incalculably great. Confining ourselves for the present to the tastes, habits, and sentiments of the more educated classes, its first result was an immense impulse given to the love of travelling both in England and in foreign countries. The extreme insularity of English life was disappearing. I have already quoted passages showing the great increase in the number of foreigners who visited England, and in the intellectual communication between England and France. The employment of foreign servants in England had

[1] Rushworth's *Historical Collections*, ii. 316, 317.

[2] *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1752, pp. 517–520, 552 554.

[3] 25 George III. c. 57.

[4] Ibid. c. 51. 27 George III. c. 26. *Sinclair on the Revenue*, ii. 383–385.

become a characteristic feature of the time, and excited much discontent. We have seen the petition of the peruke-makers to the King in 1765. In 1795 a petition, signed by more than ten thousand livery servants, against the employment of foreigners in that capacity was presented to the House of Commons, but as it was not seconded it was not received.[1] Two years earlier a similar petition had been presented by Grattan to the Irish House of Commons.[2] In families of wealth and rank a foreign tour had long been the usual termination of an education, and in the early years of the century a certain number of English and Scotch students might have been found in several of the foreign universities. The great Lord Chatham was once a student at Utrecht.[3] Charles Townshend and Wilkes were partly educated at Leyden.[4] In Scotland, during the greater part of the eighteenth century, education in a Dutch or French university was generally considered the best preparation for the professions both of law and of medicine.[5] But in the latter half of the century the movement towards the Continent was much more general, and foreign travel became the predominating passion of a large portion of the English people. 'Where one Englishman travelled,' wrote an acute observer in 1772, 'in the reigns of the first two Georges, ten now go on a grand tour. Indeed, to such a pitch is the spirit of travelling come in the kingdom, that there is scarce a citizen of large fortune but takes a flying view of France, Italy, and Germany in a summer's excursion.'[6] Gibbon wrote from Lausanne describing the crowd of English who were already thronging the beautiful shores of Lake Leman, and he mentions that he was told—though it seemed to him incredible—that in the summer of 1785 more than 40,000 English—masters and servants—were upon the Continent.[7] The same love of travelling and the same taste for natural scenery were shown at home, and Wilberforce complained bitterly that the solitude and quiet of Westmoreland were gone, and that 'the tour to the Lakes

[1] Ashton's *Old Times*, p. 316.

[2] *Irish Parliamentary Debates*, xiii. 395–397.

[3] *Chatham Correspondence*, iii. 107.

[4] See, on the number of British students at Leyden, the *Autobiography of Dr. Alexander Carlyle*.

[5] Dugald Stewart's *Dissertation*, pp. 550, 551.

[6] *Letters concerning the present State of England*, p. 240.

[7] Gibbon's *Miscellaneous Works*, ii. 383.

had become so fashionable that the banks of the Thames were scarcely more public than those of Windermere.'[1]

The closer contact between town and country life, the revelation to a cultivated and intellectual town-world of the majestic scenes of natural beauty, and the infusion of a new refinement, perception of beauty, and intellectual activity into country life, contributed largely to a memorable change which was passing over the English intellect. The empire which the great writers of the age of Anne, and especially Pope, had so long exercised was now disappearing. The fortunes and reputation of Pope form as curious and important a page in English literary history as the fortunes of Aristotle in the history of European thought. No poet was ever more clearly the outcome and the representative of the tendencies of his time. His path had been prepared by the French taste which came to England at the Restoration, turning the minds of men from the higher and wilder forms of imagination, producing a contempt for everything that was archaic, unsymmetrical, and inartistic, and making measure, and refinement, and exact and highly polished art the supreme ideals of taste. Shakespeare, as we have seen, was driven as a barbarian from the stage; Milton had few admirers and no influence, while Dryden and Cowley were in their zenith. Addison was a fine critic, and in his admiration for Milton he was before his age; but his poem 'On the Greatest English Poets,' which was written in 1694—when Pope was but six years old—illustrates with a curious fidelity the tendencies of English criticism. Chaucer's 'unpolished strain' he described as hopelessly rusted and obscured by time. Spenser's mystic tale amused a barbarous and uncultivated, but could have no charm for 'an understanding age.' Shakespeare is not even mentioned. Of Milton, it is true, he speaks in terms of high and worthy eulogy, but it was in Dryden that English poetry had culminated, though he seemed likely to have a worthy continuator in Congreve. And the grounds of this supreme admiration of Dryden were very characteristic. His were 'the sweetest numbers and the fittest words.' From his muse 'no harsh, unartful numbers fell.'

[1] Wilberforce's *Life*, i. 183.

Such requirements Pope exactly fulfilled. Probably no other poet had ever so perfectly realised the poetic ideal of his educated contemporaries, and for the long space of three-quarters of a century so absolutely formed, fixed, and satisfied their standard of taste. Then at length a new school of poetry sprang up, governed by other canons and aiming at other ideals. A generation arose who were much more sensible of his limitations than of his merits, and it became the literary fashion to describe him as not even a poet, or at best as only a poet of the lowest and most mechanical order.

Pope's poetry, indeed, bears to the poetry of the seventeenth century much the same relation as a Greek temple to a Gothic cathedral, and the limitations of his genius are very evident. He was essentially the poet of a town, the poet of a cultivated and artificial society. Though he wrote pastorals, few poets have had less genuine sense of natural beauty and less power of accurately describing it. Though much of his poetry consists of descriptions of character, he seldom contemplated human nature except as refined and tempered by civilisation, and his judgments of men show no real subtlety or depth. Noble and beautiful as are the last hundred lines of his 'Eloisa' and the concluding passage of his 'Dunciad,' no sound critic would place him among the great poets either of passion or of imagination, and the form of the heroic verse which he adopted gave little scope for variety or delicacy of harmony. The crystalline perfection of his diction has, indeed, in its own form, never been surpassed. No instrument has ever been framed more admirably adapted to express vividly and accurately noble thoughts, to point by epigram the shaft of wit or to impress itself indelibly on the memories of men. Except Shakespeare, probably no English poet has left so many lines which have passed into the daily usage of his countrymen; and a rich and beautiful fancy, a noble sense of intellectual and moral beauty streams through his verse like the sunshine through a pellucid pane. In my own judgment, the exquisitely delicate fancy of the 'Rape of the Lock,' and the restrained and dignified pathos of the 'Lines to an Unfortunate Lady,' are among the choicest products of English poetry. The fashion of literature has changed, but many modern readers, fatigued with obscurity, and affectation,

and paradox, and exaggeration, will gladly turn to a poet who never wrote a careless or an unmeaning line, who embodied in transparent verse so many noble thoughts and images and characters, and whose language, if it has not the Rembrandt-like depth of colouring of some of his successors, has at least all the severe and polished beauty of Greek sculpture. But the charm of his versification is more the charm of supremely perfect rhetoric than of music; and, like the century he represented, poetic sensibility and imagination are in his poetry unduly subordinated to the reasoning power.

The balance between these elements has rarely been attained, and the ages and nations in which the imagination reigns most absolutely are not, I think, those which produce the truest poets. There is a state of mind, which is often seen in Celtic and in Oriental nations, where all the outlines of the real seem to fade away; where all thought is of the nature of dreaming; where strong, vague, poetic emotions form the staple of the feelings, and where the mind, habitually living in an atmosphere of the fantastic and unreal, loses all sense of the probabilities and hard realities of life. Such a soil commonly produces a rich efflorescence of legends, but it rarely produces poetry of the highest order. As gold cannot be worked without a certain admixture of alloy, so imagination is rarely converted into great poetry except by minds which have a large admixture of the elements of prose, a firm grasp of the realities of things, a strong sense of the practical and the human. Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe all possessed it most eminently. Their minds were essentially sane. Their measure of probability was sound, and they could write with a judgment and a precision, a distinctness and accuracy of outline, which no prose writer could have surpassed.

This perfect balance of the purely imaginative and the rational elements is only found in the greatest poets; and while Shelley has been the most illustrious modern example of the excessive predominance of the first, Pope and his school are examples of the equally excessive predominance of the second. But many years before the eighteenth century had terminated there were signs of a new tendency in poetry. It was plainly visible in the 'Seasons' of Thomson and in the 'Elegy'

of Gray; it may be traced in some degree in Goldsmith's 'Deserted Village' and in Crabbe's admirable pictures of rural life; and the whole of the poetry of Cowper was a revolt against the dominant school and an aspiration towards a wholly different ideal. A love of scenery, and especially of its grander forms, was evidently growing. There was an increasing appreciation of simple nature, of untutored emotions, of older, freer, and more artless poetry. The publication of the 'Reliques of Ancient Poetry' by Bishop Percy in 1765 profoundly affected English taste, and the revived sense of the beauties of ancient poetry was stimulated by 'Warton's History' and reflected in the forgeries of Chatterton and Macpherson. In spite of a few popular collections,[1] the wealth of poetry which lay entombed in the songs and ballads of Scotland was unknown to the English world till a Scotch peasant, formed by them and by the school of nature, became the greatest lyrical poet of his age. By a few strokes of genius Burns gave many of them an immortal form, and, as has been truly said, he did for the old songs of Scotland what Shakespeare had done for the English drama that preceded him.[2]

The eighteenth-century movement, of which Burns and Cowper were the most illustrious representatives, and which just before the close of the century produced the 'Lyrical Ballads,' advanced in spite of the influence of the great critic of the day. Johnson had no sense of natural beauty, which, indeed, he was too blind to see; he could discover little or nothing to admire in the ancient ballads, and his canons of taste and criticism were still essentially those of the age of Anne.[3] The

[1] See on these collections Shairp's *Aspects of Poetry*, pp. 203, 206, 207.

[2] I owe this remark to one who is not only a great poet, but also a most admirable critic — Alfred Tennyson.

[3] In that singularly interesting book—Twining's *Country Clergyman of the Eighteenth Century*—there is a criticism of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, written in 1784, which shows clearly that the critical age of Coleridge was drawing near. 'His poetry,' writes Twining—'I mean what he esteems such—is only good sense put in good metre. He sees no promise of Milton's genius in his juvenile poems. He feels no beauties in Mr Gray's Odes. Did you ever see a more schoolboyish criticism than his upon Gray? What he says about blank verse I abominate. . . . In general, I find my palate in matters of poetry continually at variance with Dr. Johnson's. I don't mean this alone as any proof that he is wrong. But the general taste and feelings of the most poetical people, of the best poets, are against him. . . . He is a man of sense, and has an ear—that is all.' (P. 120.)

Shakespearian revival, however, assisted the change, and it was part of a movement which was much more than English. Herder collected the popular German songs. Lessing led a revolt against the classical standards of the age of Lewis XIV., and founded in Germany a school of criticism very like that which was afterwards founded in England by Coleridge. Under the influence of Rousseau and his disciple, Bernardin de St.-Pierre, what French writers call 'the sentiment of nature' acquired a new prominence in French literature. The descriptions of Swiss scenery in the 'Nouvelle Héloise' gave an extraordinary impulse to the taste for natural beauty, and it is curiously illustrated by the fact that more than sixty accounts of travels in Switzerland were published between 1750 and 1795.[1] The literary influence of the French Revolution was in the same direction. Not only old governments and societies, but even the old dies in which European thought had been moulded, seemed broken. The empire of the artificial and the conventional was relaxed, and a new strain of passion was introduced into human affairs.

These remarks seem to have led us far from the social history of England in the eighteenth century; but habits of life and habits of thought are in truth indissolubly connected, and new facilities of travelling and an increased contact between town and country had, I believe, a real and a considerable part in the literary movement I have described. The increase of luxury and refinement which was so conspicuous among the country gentlemen was still more manifest in the industrial classes; but while in the upper classes the tendency was towards a greater assimilation of manners, in the middle classes it was rather to define and distinguish a variety of grades. There was already a rich merchant aristocracy who vied in splendour with the first nobility. Among tradesmen, the custom of apprentices living in the houses, mixing with the families, and serving at the tables of their masters, now began to pass away.[2] It was a change which was not without grave social and moral evils, and it corresponded to that greater division between the farmer and his labourer which has taken place in the present century. The

[1] Babeau, *Les Voyageurs en France*, p. 316.
[2] See Wilberforce's *Life*, ii. 164.

migration of the rich shopkeeper from his shop, which we have seen in the first half of the century, had become more general. In the earlier years of George II. a thriving London tradesman not only lived in his shop, but rarely ventured more than once or twice in the summer beyond the sound of Bow bells, and then only to Edmonton or Hornsey. There was but one dish of meat upon his table. French or Spanish wines were never seen there except at Christmas. If he entertained a friend it was with elder or raisin wine made by his wife, and with a tankard of strong ale; his single maidservant and his apprentice served, and when he at last retired from business it was usually to a small villa at Turnham Green, or Hackney, or Clapham Common. In the country towns the habits were even more frugal. 'Formerly,' said Dr. Johnson in 1773, 'a good tradesman had no fire but in the kitchen; none in the parlour except on the Sunday. My father, who was a magistrate of Lichfield, lived thus. They never began to have a fire in the parlour but on leaving off business, or on some great revolution of their life.' But George III. had not been many years on the throne before these habits were totally changed. A successful tradesman had two houses. He left his shop as much as possible to his apprentices and his journeymen. He spent two or three months of every summer at Margate or Brighton. His wife and daughters imitated the dress, tastes, and pleasures of the gentry. A footman stood behind his table. He entertained his friends with Madeira and claret. Bloomsbury, Queen, and Bedford Squares, in the close neighbourhood of the still aristocratic quarter of Soho, were now filled with rich tradesmen, and shortly after the middle of the century it was noticed as a new and characteristic fact that private carriages belonging to tradesmen were becoming common.[1]

The same strain of ostentation ran through the humbler ranks of industry. Fielding attributed the great increase of robberies in his time largely to increased extravagance of dress,

[1] Grose's *Olio*, pp. 24–29, 73. Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (Croker's ed.) p. 283. See, too, some curious papers on the changes in the habits of tradesmen, *Ann. Regis.* 1766, pp. 205–207; 1767, p. 168; 1768, pp. 202, 203. *Letters on the present State of England* (1772), pp. 227, 228. There is a clever and amusing paper on tradesmen's villas, at the time when the fashion had just begun, and when a great simplicity of manners still survived, in the *Connoisseur*, No. 33 (1754).

and there were loud complaints that apprentices and clerks were attempting to imitate all the fashions of the Maccaronies.[1]

These complaints of growing extravagance in the industrial classes were too common in the latter half of the eighteenth century not to rest on some real foundation. It was said that the old English frugality had departed, that a spirit of speculation had taken the place of the spirit of patient and prolonged industry, that the standard of commercial integrity and the high quality of English work were seriously lowered. Birmingham, about the middle of the century, had set up a manufacture of cheap guns, and it is stated that more than one hundred and fifty thousand were sent annually to the coast of Africa, where they were sold for five and sixpence apiece, and where at least half of them burst in the hand that fired them.[2] The assize of bread, fixing its price, was met by systematic adulteration. There were complaints of a similar adulteration of beer, brandy, and wine, and an especial Act of Parliament mentions and condemns the practice of selling sloe-leaves and ash-leaves for tea. Other Acts under George III. condemned frauds in the coal trade and in the manufacture of cordage for ships, and the frequent use of short measures in the textile manufactures. But perhaps the loudest complaints were of the exceeding badness of the new buildings. The rapid extension of London had so greatly raised the price of bricks that the makers had begun to mix with the brick, clay, ashes, and the slop of the streets; and the material of the bricks was so bad that London, it was said, without the intervention of an earthquake, was threatened with the fate of Lisbon. There were constant instances of half-built houses falling before they could be finished, and it was related that the master of a ship which carried several thousand bricks to Nova Scotia found on his arrival that more than half of them had crumbled into dust during the voyage.[3]

[1] 'The majority of clerks,' said a writer in 1789, 'have not more than 50*l.* to find their board; shopmen 30*l.* and their board. Some few may have more, but when you see a servant with his hair elegantly dressed every day, silk or nankeen breeches, white silk stockings, change of buckles with every fashion, out every evening at playhouses; . . . when a master sees such an extravagance he can have no difficulty in drawing a just conclusion.' Wales's *My Grandfather's Pocket-book from* 1701–1796, 171.

[2] Shelburne's *Life*, i. 404.

[3] *The London Chronicle*, June 2–5, Aug. 2–4, 1764; *Letters on the present State of England*, pp. 240, 241; Pike's *Hist. of Crime*, ii. 397.

These evils were undoubtedly real, though they were certainly not peculiar to the latter half of the eighteenth century. They were evils such as always spring out of increased competition, increased industrial activity, increased facilities of rapidly acquiring wealth. In spite of a few calamities, the eighteenth century, till within eight years of its close, had been in England a period of singular and almost uninterrupted prosperity. In the reign of George II. the exports had almost doubled.[1] In the fourteen years between the accession of George III. and the beginning of the American troubles they again rose from 14,693,270*l.* to 17,128,029*l.*[2] Then came a great check, and as America had been the chief market for English goods, there were loud predictions of approaching industrial ruin. But within a year of the signature of peace the English exports to independent America exceeded those of the last years of the colonial period; and the first ten years of the Administration of Pitt were among the most prosperous England had ever known. In spite of increased debt and increased taxation, the exports rose to 24,900,000*l.* The tonnage of English vessels at least doubled.[3] The revenue in nearly all its branches proved elastic, and all the great manufacturing and commercial towns advanced with startling rapidity. The great and general rise of prices under George III. at once indicated and stimulated industrial prosperity, and the chief benefit naturally fell to the productive classes. Hume has left the interesting remark that, in the twenty-eight years that elapsed between the writing of the sixth volume of his 'History' and the publication of the edition of 1786, prices in England had perhaps risen more than in the preceding 150 years.[4] In a pamphlet published in 1779 it was noticed as a characteristic feature of the time, that the papers were now full of accounts of tallow-chandlers, grocers, and other tradesmen leaving fortunes of 20,000*l.* or 30,000*l.*[5] The same energy which showed itself in reckless and distempered speculation showed itself also in commercial enterprise; the discoveries of Captain Cook extended

[1] Craik's *History of Commerce*, ii. 202.
[2] Ibid. ii. 202; iii. 67.
[3] Chalmers' *Estimate*, p. 147; Craik, iii. 83–85.
[4] Hume's *History*, vi. 177.
[5] *Comparative Burdens of Great Britain and Ireland*, p. 23.

the horizon of the world, and in New Zealand and Australia he founded colonies which already contain a far greater English population than the American colonies at the time of their separation, and which seem likely to play a great and most beneficent part in the history of mankind.

In agriculture the period we are considering was marked by improvements which added largely to the productiveness of the soil, but they were improvements which for the most part were not favourable to the small farmer, for they required an amount of capital and skill which he did not possess. The system of drill husbandry and a greatly improved system of rotation of crops were introduced by Jethro Tull in the first half of the century, and though like many other eminent benefactors of mankind he died half ruined and unappreciated, the methods which he taught spread widely after his death. The cultivation of field turnips, though not absolutely new, was immensely extended, chiefly through the efforts of Lord Townshend, the old colleague and rival of Walpole, whose great farming experiments in Norfolk shortly after the middle of the century contributed very materially to the advance of British agriculture. Several other kinds of field cultivation were about the same time introduced or extended. The use of lime in preparing the ground became common. A number of ingenious agricultural instruments were invented, and a new and improved system of drainage was introduced by Elkington. But great as were the improvements in arable farming, they were surpassed by those which were effected in the improvement of sheep and cattle. It was about 1755 that Bakewell began his experiments with this object. He travelled over much of the Continent for the purpose of studying the different breeds, and he soon perceived that by judicious crossing it was possible to raise the breeds in England to a perfection hitherto unknown. Several great landlords and farmers in England and Scotland perceived at once the value of the discovery, and in the last half of the century the breed of animals in England was probably more improved than in all the recorded centuries that preceded it. Merino sheep were about the same time introduced, apparently by the King himself.

There is a remarkable passage in Arthur Young's 'Tour in France' which shows clearly the relation of the discoveries I have enumerated to the consolidation of farms. He is speaking of the smallness of French farms as compared with English ones, of the great inferiority of French farm cultivation, and of the manifest connection between these two facts. 'Where,' he asks, 'is the little farmer to be found who will cover his whole farm with marl at the rate of 100 to 150 tons per acre? who will drain all his land at the expense of 2*l.* or 3*l.* per acre? . . . who to improve the breed of his sheep will give 1,000 guineas for the use of a single ram for a single season? . . . who will send across the kingdom to distant provinces for new implements and for men to use them? who will employ and pay men for residing in provinces where practices are found which they want to introduce into their farms? At the very mention of such exertions common in England, what mind can be so perversely framed as to imagine for a single moment that such things are to be effected by little farmers? Deduct from agriculture all the practices that have made it flourishing in this island, and you have precisely the management of small farms.'

It is impossible, indeed, to consider the history of English agriculture in the last century without arriving at the conclusion that its peculiar excellence and type sprang mainly from the fact that the ownership and control of land were chiefly in the hands of a wealthy and not of a needy class; and a large number of great gentlemen farmers led the way in all the paths of progress that have been described. Another influence, however, of a much less beneficial character, which was tending to the extinction of small farms, grew out of the sudden extension of manufactures. The domestic manufactures, which had hitherto formed an important element in the life and resources of a small farmer, suddenly ceased. Before this time not only the implements of culture and articles of dress required in a farmer's house were made at home, but also in many parts of England the wives and daughters of small farmers were habitually employed in spinning, weaving, and manufacturing a great variety of articles for the London market. In its moral effects such a system of manufacture was immensely preferable to that of the crowded manufactory, while economically it had

the great advantage of enabling a farming class to exist in comfort on farms which could never support them by agricultural produce alone. It had the advantage also of furnishing employment for the periods of the year when agricultural labour is very slack, for the infirm members of the family, for delicate women, for old men who were too weak to labour in the fields. But the inventions of Arkwright, Hargreaves, and Crompton destroyed this resource. Manufactures were concentrated in great centres, and the articles which had once been produced by manual dexterity were now produced in such quantities and with such cheapness by machinery that all other modes of producing them ceased. This was, I believe, one of the most serious of the many serious evils that have accompanied and qualified the great benefits which manufacturing progress has produced.

In this manner, by irresistible economical causes which were independent of, and stronger than, any legislation, the small farmers were gradually turned into wage-earning labourers. The improvements in husbandry and the improvements in manufactures were alike incompatible with the old system, and the balance of profits was now clearly on the side of large farms. Arthur Young calculated in 1768 that the average size over the greater part of England was then slightly under 300 acres,[1] and the tendency was undoubtedly in the direction of still further consolidation. He did not in any way regret it. The nett produce of the soil was largely increased. He contended with great force that through the increased demand for labour enlarged farms supported a greater population than small ones;[2] that in every district where agriculture and manufactures were combined, the quality of husbandry was below the average; and that the position of the English agricultural labourer was incontestably superior to that of the small tenant on the Continent. Yet, when all this is admitted, the sudden destruction of one of the chief means of livelihood of countless families could not have been effected without much

[1] *Northern Tour*, iv. 192–202.

[2] 'The single circumstance,' he says, 'of much of the labour of small farms being servants unmarried, and nine-tenths of that of great ones labourers married, makes a great difference;' and the large farmers, he adds, almost invariably expend more labour than the small ones, in proportion to their acres. Young's *Political Arithmetic*, pp. 294, 295.

suffering, and there could have been no immediate increase of wages sufficient to compensate for it. A vast displacement of industries took place, and a change of conditions, which uprooted a great part of the agricultural population from the soil, brought with it grave moral evils and created divisions and antagonisms of interest which may prove very dangerous in the future. A long series of unusually bad harvests, shortly after the middle of the century, aggravated the transition, and it was soon found that restraints on marriage act much less powerfully on simple labourers than on occupiers of the soil.[1]

Another important feature in the agricultural condition of England in the latter half of the century was that it ceased to be a wheat-exporting country. The English corn laws had already passed through several phases. The older policy of the country was to prohibit absolutely the exportation of corn, but with the increased production of agriculture and the increased power of the agricultural interest, this policy was abandoned at the end of the fourteenth century; and after more than one violent fluctuation a law of Charles II. established a system which was in force at the Revolution. Under this law free exportation was permitted as long as the home price did not exceed fifty-three shillings and fourpence a quarter; while importation was restrained by prohibitory duties until that price was attained in the home market, and by a heavy duty of eight shillings in the quarter when the home price ranged between fifty-three shillings and fourpence and eighty shillings. At the Revolution, however, a new policy was adopted. The duties on importation were unchanged, while exportation was not only permitted but encouraged by a bounty of five shillings in the quarter as long as the home price did not exceed forty-eight shillings. It was the firm conviction of the statesmen of this period that, husbandry being the necessary and main industry of the greater part of the English people, and the foundation on which the whole system of political power in England is based, its encouragement should be a capital object of legislation, and that it was also a matter of the utmost political moment that

[1] See a striking passage on the difference in Young's *Northern Tour*, iv. 248. See, too, Kay's *Social Condition of the People*, i. 360.

the island should be self-supporting, independent of all other nations for the necessaries of life. The new subsidy to the landed interest, it was urged, would inevitably give a great impulse to tillage, and by making it possible to cultivate with profit a larger area of land would make the home price of wheat both steadier and lower. When the farmer cultivated only for the home market he was naturally tempted to understock his farm through fear that his produce might be left on his hands, and if the harvest fell but a little below the average there was an immediate scarcity. But with the prospect of a large and profitable foreign market more corn would be produced and fluctuations in price would be less rapid. In periods of great scarcity, however, temporary Acts were passed prohibiting for a short time the exportation, and suspending the duties on imported corn.

This legislation has been the subject of one of those great revolutions of opinion which must always impress upon a judicious student a deep sense of the fallibility of political reasonings. During the greater part of the eighteenth century its wisdom appears to have been perfectly unquestioned, and it was accepted and maintained by statesmen of every party. Arthur Young has devoted a considerable space to the subject of the corn laws, and he considers the English law one of the highest examples of political wisdom. The system of an absolutely free corn trade, which prevailed in Holland, would, he maintained, be ruinous in a country which depended mainly on its agriculture. The system of forbidding all exportation of corn, which prevailed in Spain, Portugal, and many parts of Italy, and during the greater part of the century in France, was altogether incompatible with a flourishing corn husbandry. Prices would be too fluctuating—in some years so low that the farmers would be ruined, in others so high that the people would be starved. It had been 'the singular felicity' of this country to have devised a plan which accomplished the strange paradox of at once lowering the price of corn and encouraging agriculture. 'This was one of the most remarkable strokes of policy, and the most contrary to the general ideas of all Europe, of any that ever were carried into execution;' and 'it cannot be doubted,' he said, 'that this system of exporting with a bounty has

been of infinite national importance.'[1] Burke declared that experience, the most unerring of guides, had amply proved the value of the corn bounty as a means of supplying the English people with cheap bread;[2] and Malthus defended it against the strictures of Adam Smith, and maintained that it had proved an inestimable benefit to the labouring poor.[3] Modern economists, on the other hand, are accustomed entirely to condemn it. They describe it as one of the worst instances of a class employing their legislative power to subsidise themselves at the expense of the community, and they have altogether refused to attribute to the corn bounties the remarkable and undoubted fact that in spite of the increase of population the price of corn was from fifteen to twenty per cent. cheaper during the seventy years that followed the law of 1689 than it had been during the forty years that preceded it.[4] I have quoted in a former volume several statistics about the price of wheat. It will here be sufficient to repeat that its average during the first sixty years of the eighteenth century was but a fraction above forty shillings a quarter, and that during the forty years which preceded 1750 it sank as low as one pound sixteen shillings without being accompanied by any corresponding fall in wages.[5]

Shortly after the Peace of 1763, however, there were evident signs that population was beginning to press upon the means of subsistence. The export of corn diminished; the price rose, and several temporary Acts were passed to relieve the scarcity. Something, no doubt, was due to a succession of bad harvests, and something to the spread of pasture in consequence of the discoveries of Bakewell; but the main cause appears to have been the rapid growth of the population in the manufacturing centres. In the decade from 1770 to 1780 the imports and exports of wheat for the first time almost balanced each other, and after 1790 England ceased to be an exporting country.[6]

[1] Arthur Young's *Political Arithmetic*, pp. 27–34, 193, 276. It is remarkable that in this book, which was published in 1774, Young dwells upon the great probability of American corn being brought over to England at a price with which it would be impossible for the English farmers to compete. See pp. 279–281.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xvii. 480.

[3] *On Population*, bk. iii. c. 10.

[4] Craik's *Hist. of Commerce*, ii. 145–147.

[5] See the tables in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, bk. i. ii.; Malthus, bk. iii. c. 10; and also a great many facts on the subject in Young's *Political Arithmetic*.

[6] See Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p. 147.

The changing conditions of English agriculture were met by the Act of 1773—an Act which has been described as the most liberal English corn law before 1846. It admitted foreign wheat at the almost nominal duty of sixpence a quarter as soon as the home price had risen to forty-eight shillings a quarter, and rye, peas, beans, barley, and oats on terms which were equally easy. It maintained the old bounty of five shillings a quarter on exported wheat, but it made both that bounty and the liberty of exportation cease when the home price was forty-four shillings. The system of bounties on exportation was extended to oats, peas, and beans; but, as in the case of barley and wheat, the exportation was forbidden after the home price had risen to a defined and moderate level. The object of the Legislature was to prevent those violent fluctuations of price which had been frequent before the Act of 1689; and it was believed that, in consequence of these measures, wheat would not fluctuate greatly beyond the limits of forty-four and forty-eight shillings a quarter, and that the price of other grain would be equally steady.[1]

Great efforts were at the same time made to bring a larger part of England under cultivation, and enclosure bills multiplied with a wonderful rapidity. An immense proportion of England at this time was still waste, or was held in common and very slightly cultivated. By the law of England the soil of common land belonged usually to the lord of the manor, but the surrounding freeholders had certain defined rights upon it. They were of different kinds—rights of pasture, which were often let out at a penny an acre,[2] rights of cutting wood and turf, and also rights of cultivation. In England, wrote in 1723 an author who was very conversant with agricultural matters, 'every parish has three large common fields for corn belonging to it (besides the common for pasture), wherein every freeholder has his share—one six acres, another four, another eight or ten, according to his substance—not lying contiguous in each field, but perhaps in two or three places, according to the quality of the land. Two of these fields are continually under corn—namely, one for the winter corn and the other for the summer.'[3] When

[1] *Wealth of Nations*, bk. iv. c. 5.

[2] Report of the Committee on Waste Lands in 1795.

[3] *Considerations for Promoting*

the crop was on the ground it belonged exclusively to the person to whom it had been granted, but when the crop was secured the land reverted to commonage among all the persons who had grants of land in such common fields.[1]

The cultivation of these lands appears to have been the worst, the most wasteful, and the most exhausting in England. The pasture land was usually of a wretched description, and often enormously overstocked. Nothing was done for it in the way of draining or manure, and the greater part of common land appears to have been perfectly uncultivated and almost wholly unproductive. It has been estimated, probably without any exaggeration, that the enclosure and separate cultivation of the common lands must have increased their produce at least five-fold.[2] It is not true that these lands were public property. The rights that have been described belonged to the surrounding freeholders in defined and recognised proportions, or were conveyed to tenants in the leases of their farms. There were claims, however, of an uncertain and vague character, resting on long prescription; there were numerous squatters who had settled on these great wastes without any legal rights, and who obtained from them a scanty and precarious livelihood, and a large vagrant population of gipsies, tramps, poachers, smugglers, and nomadic mendicants found them an important element in their existence.

There were some Acts of Parliament under George II. for enabling the lord of the manor, with the assent of the majority of the commoners, to enclose portions of waste land for the purpose of planting for the benefit of the commoners; and in 1773 a general Act was passed 'for the better cultivation, improvement, and regulation of the common arable fields, wastes, and commons of pasture in this kingdom.' It provided that, with the assent of three-fourths of the commoners, tillage and arable

Agriculture, by R.L.V.N. (Lord Molesworth), p. 19. The fullest account I have seen of the manner in which common fields were managed is in a pamphlet called *Suggestions for Rendering the Enclosure of Common Fields a Source of Population and Riches*, by Thomas Stone, land surveyor (1787). There is a curious description of the way in which these fields were allotted, in the evidence of Mr. Blamire, in the Report of the Committee on Commons Enclosure in 1844, p. 27.

[1] See Sir J. Sinclair's Report of the Committee of the House of Commons on Waste Lands in 1795.

[2] McCulloch's *Account of the British Empire*, i. 580.

lands lying in open and common fields might be fenced in and managed in concert under the direction of a field master or field reeve, and that any lord of the manor might, with the consent of three-fourths of the commoners, lease for a time not exceeding four years, a twelfth part of the common, applying the rent to draining and fencing the remainder. The rights of all cottagers were scrupulously protected, and in cases where they were affected by the provisions of the law, full compensation was to be granted.[1]

The transformation of common land into private property was, however, as yet effected only by private Acts of Parliament, and these Acts multiplied in the latter half of the century with extraordinary rapidity. Under Anne there had been only two Acts of Enclosure, comprising 1,439 acres; under George I. there were sixteen, comprising 17,660 acres; under George II. there were 226, comprising 318,778 acres; but from the accession of George III. to the end of the year 1796 no less than 1,532 Enclosure Acts were passed, including 2,804,197 acres. In the Report of a Committee of the House of Commons in 1797 it was estimated that there were still 7,800,000 acres of waste land or common fields. The whole subject was considered by Committees of the House of Commons in 1795, 1797, and 1800, and on each occasion Sir John Sinclair drew up a valuable report, which, together with much evidence about the existing condition of these lands, clearly indicates the disposition and intentions of the Legislature. It was contended that it was of the utmost importance that this vast neglected portion of the English soil should be brought into speedy cultivation, and added to the national resources. It was a great evil that England should rely for her supply of corn on foreign importation. Since she had been compelled to do so, its price had become much higher, and had been subject to much greater fluctuations, and a serious element of uncertainty had thus been introduced into the relations between landlords and tenants. The enclosures, it was urged, were of the utmost value to the poor. They were for their benefit, for they contributed to furnish a cheap and abundant supply of corn; and they were also for their benefit because, by adding enormously to the demand for agricultural labour, they

[1] 29 George II. c. 36; 31 ibid. c. 41; 13 George III. c. 81.

raised the rate of wages. There were also many minor and subsidiary advantages. The enclosures made the country much more defensible in the event of an invasion. They improved the climate and health of the inhabitants, which suffered severely from the vast tracts of undrained land. They mitigated the burden of the tithes, as in the Enclosure Acts the lay and spiritual owners of tithes generally acquiesced in receiving a portion of land instead of their right to tithes.[1] They added greatly to the good order and security of the community by enclosing wastes which were the especial resorts and refuges of highwaymen and footpads, and of all the idlest and most disorderly elements of society.

The change was an inevitable one. With the famine prices of the great French War it advanced with gigantic strides, and it is impossible reasonably to question that it was a vast benefit to the community. 'Without enclosures,' Arthur Young emphatically said, 'there can be no good husbandry;' and he has shown how, under their influence, great tracts which had once been inhabited only by a wretched and thinly scattered population sunk in poverty, idleness, and crime, had become the fertile and prosperous home of thriving industry.[2] Young was before all things a farmer, and he may be suspected of some bias towards the landed interest; but such a bias will hardly be attributed to Bentham. But the patriarch of the philosophical Radicals is at least equally enthusiastic. He describes the division of common lands as 'one of the greatest and best understood improvements' of the age. 'When we pass over the lands which have undergone this happy change,' he writes, 'we are enchanted as with the appearance of a new colony. Harvests, flocks, and smiling habitations have succeeded to the sadness and sterility of the desert. Happy conquests of peaceful industry! noble aggrandisements, which inspire no alarms and provoke no enemies!' The enclosures he emphatically declared to be alike favourable to the interests of rich and poor. They augmented the wealth of the former, but they at the same time

[1] See Bishop Watson's *Anecdotes of His Own Life*, ii. 60.

[2] There are many passages relating to enclosures scattered through Young's *Tours*, but he has treated the subject most fully and elaborately in his *Political Arithmetic*. In this treatise he answers at length Price's arguments against enclosures.

with equal certainty raised the wages of labour in the very quarter where those wages had hitherto been most miserably inadequate.[1]

It was impossible, however, that such a change could have been accomplished without producing some opposition and without inflicting some serious suffering. Among the eccentricities of opinion of Dr. Price was a conviction that the population of England had been declining since the Revolution, and he denounced enclosures as one great cause of depopulation. Multitudes of poor men who, without any legal right, had found a home upon the common land were driven away homeless and without compensation. Except by occasional riots they had no means of striking the attention of the world, and their sufferings would probably have found no expression in literature had not a poet of exquisite and tender genius described them in one of the most admirable poems of the eighteenth century.[2] The position of the many small freeholders and leaseholders who had legal rights in the common land was different. The Enclosure Bills carefully provided that every legal right should be ascertained and compensated, and there is, I believe, no reason to doubt that in general the commissioners honestly endeavoured to carry this purpose into effect. The compensations were sometimes made in the form of money and sometimes by the allotment to each commoner of a portion of the divided land. The expense, however, of a private Act of Parliament, even when it was absolutely uncontested, commonly amounted to sums ranging from 180*l.* to 300*l.*, and sometimes to much larger sums. Much the larger part of the lands fell to the lord of the manor. In the case of small enclosures, rapacious country attorneys, surveyors, and Parliamentary fees often swallowed up all, or nearly all, the proportion of compensation which the poor man should have received for the loss of his common rights. The interests of future generations of labourers were almost wholly neglected. There were complaints of the absolute power, and sometimes of the

[1] Bentham's *Works*, i. 342; viii. 449.

[2] 'Where then, ah! where, shall poverty reside,
To 'scape the pressure of contiguous pride?
If to some common's fenceless limits strayed,
He drives his flock to pick the scanty blade,
Those fenceless fields the sons of wealth divide,
And e'en the bare worn common is denied.'
GOLDSMITH'S *Deserted Village*.

partiality, of the commissioners; and it was said—no doubt with much truth—that where doubtful, intricate, and conflicting interests were in presence, where the terms of leases had to be altered and new adjustments of rent to be made, the poor man who could not fee counsel or convey witnesses contended at a most unfair disadvantage with his wealthy neighbour.[1]

The excessive legal expense of the enclosures, which was a serious and undoubted evil, was partly remedied by the Enclosure Acts of 1801 and 1845; though no change in landed property which passes through the hands of English lawyers has ever yet been cheaply effected. The example of Frederick the Great, who for twenty years before 1783 is said to have expended out of his very moderate revenue not less than 300,000*l.* a year in encouraging, by premiums and in other ways, the reclamation and cultivation of land in Prussia, was held up as an example;[2] and the permanent advantages to all classes of Englishmen of the great enclosures of the latter half of the eighteenth century and of the early years of the nineteenth century have been very great. The movement, however, contributed powerfully to that consolidation of farms and that conversion of small tenants into agricultural labourers which the introduction of more expensive farming, and the extinction of domestic industries had already begun. Some small farms were at once turned into large ones by enclosing considerable tracts of common land, and numerous little farmers, who had been just able to subsist with the assistance of free pasture, now found their position untenable. Money compensation was soon spent or divided; the little farm was thrown up and absorbed into its larger neighbour, and the farmer himself became an agricultural labourer.

In a country like England, where farming is carried on upon scientific principles, with a large expenditure of capital and with proportionally large returns, this transformation appears to me to have been absolutely inevitable. From the time when the domestic manufactures were destroyed by the factory system, and when the commons were for the most part enclosed, the

[1] Much information on these subjects will be found in the Reports of the Parliamentary Committees in 1795, 1797, 1800, and 1844; in the Debates upon the Commons Act of 1845; in a work called *Six Essays on Commons Preservation* (1867); and in the recent book of Mr. Cunningham, *Politics and Economics*, pp. 208–216.

[2] Sinclair, Report of the Committee of the House of Commons, 1797.

economical causes became irresistible. At the same time the change is not one to be looked upon with enthusiasm. In comparing the lot of a day-labourer in a prosperous country with that of a small farmer or peasant proprietor it will usually be found that the annual earnings of the former are larger than those of the latter; that his food is better and more abundant; that his daily labour is less excessive; that he is free from the burden of debt which weighs so heavily on the peasant proprietors of the Continent; that he possesses, since the law of settlement has been relaxed, a much larger amount of real independence. On the other hand, in some of the most important moral respects his condition is far inferior. The possession of land, or the hope of gradually attaining it, is found by experience to be one of the strongest of all incentives to providence, industry, and self-restraint; and in the poorest classes these qualities hold an especially prominent place among the springs of character and in the hierarchy of virtues. Probably no other class in English life can hope for so little from their exercise as the agricultural labourer. Probably no other class lead a life so purely animal, look forward so little to the future, are so completely dissociated from national interests, or yield so readily to the temptations of the public-house. The possession of a little garden brings with it a whole train of tastes and habits to which the modern labourer is a stranger.[1] Gross ignorance, reckless multiplication, and a deplorably low standard of comfort and decency long characterised very generally the agricultural labourers of England. The improvidence created by parish relief, the extreme imperfection of country education, and the overcrowding of dwellings, created partly by the difficulty of obtaining cottages and partly by their own miserable standard of comfort, aggravated the situation, and the detailed inquiries that were made into the condition of agricultural labourers between 1840 and 1850 revealed a social condition which was disgraceful to civilisation.[2] Much has since been

[1] This fact was not unrecognised in the eighteenth century. Eden noticed that in parts of Leicestershire 'most of the poor have little gardens, in which they chiefly cultivate potatoes. Gardens are found to be great incitements to industry, and accordingly in some parishes the poor have four or five acres each, assigned them for a garden at a very moderate rent. This supplies them with cheese, butter, and milk at an easy rate.' Eden's *History of the Poor*, i. 569.

[2] A terrible array of facts illus-

done to improve it, and in some parts of England it has been very materially changed; but the condition of the agricultural labourer is still a phase of English life on which no patriot can look with pleasure, and the sharp contrasts of interest or sentiment which divide the farmer from the labourer may constitute a grave political danger to the Empire.

The increase of population in England in the latter half of the eighteenth century appears to have been very rapid. According to the most careful computation the population of England and Wales in 1700 was about 5,134,561; in 1750, 6,039,684; in 1801, 9,172,980.[1] The immense acceleration of the rate of progress in the second half of the century was mainly in the towns, and was due to the growth of manufactures and commerce, and it was the leading cause of the multiplication of enclosures. The English poor law, compelling every parish to support its paupers, did undoubtedly encourage reckless and improvident marriages, but it had on the other hand a strong repressive influence on the agricultural population by making it the plain interest of every landlord to discourage cottages or small farms which might shelter families likely some day to fall upon the rates. The law of Elizabeth requiring every cottage to be connected with four acres of land appears to have become obsolete for a considerable time before its repeal in 1775; and it is probable that the appalling condition of overcrowding, indecency, and sanitary neglect in the labourers' cottages which was disclosed by the Parliamentary Commission of 1842 existed to a large extent before the close of the eighteenth century. Unmarried labourers, it is true, still lived very generally with the farmers, but there were already loud complaints of the extreme difficulty which the poor found in procuring habitations. Labourers, it was said, who wished to migrate from their parents were sometimes refused permission from the lord of the manor

trating this truth will be found in Kay's *Social Condition of the People*, i. 472–579. See, too, *England as It is*, by William Johnston, c. xxx. (1851), a book which appears to me to contain a great deal of valuable, though very unpalatable, truth. See, too, an essay on 'The Domestic Economy of the Labouring Classes,' in Walker's *The Original*, pp. 199–218.

[1] This was the calculation made by Mr. Finlayson. McCulloch's *Account of the British Empire*, art. 'Population.' The census of 1801 (the first made) reckoned the population of England and Wales at 8,872,980, exclusive of the soldiers and sailors; these amounted to 470,598 for the United Kingdom.

to build a cottage on the common. They could neither obtain tenements, nor small plots to build upon, and they sometimes availed themselves of a long winter night to raise a hovel on the roadside or on the common.[1] The difficulty was naturally aggravated when the commons were enclosed; but whether on the whole the direct and immediate effect of enclosures was to diminish the agricultural population has been a matter of much controversy. The most probable opinion seems to be that, by increasing employment and production, they on the whole rather stimulated it.[2] But great displacements occurred. Districts once covered with small arable farms were turned into immense pastures, and there were complaints that a single man monopolised a tract which had formerly supported twelve or fourteen industrious families.[3] Whole villages which had depended on free pasture land and fuel, dwindled and perished, and a stream of emigrants passed to America. Macaulay, in an essay which is by no means among the most valuable of his productions, has censured Goldsmith's 'Deserted Village' as wholly unnatural and incongruous. The village, he says, in its happy state could only have existed in England; the village in its deserted state could only have existed in Ireland. But there are contemporary pictures of the effects of enclosures in England which go far to refute the criticism.[4]

[1] Eden's *History of the Poor*, i. 361. 'Cottages,' says Arthur Young, 'are in general the habitations of labourers, who all swarm with children; many have double, treble, and even quadruple families.' *Northern Tour*, iv. 415. On the powerful influence of the poor law in inducing both landlords and farmers to forbid the erection of labourers' cottages, see Young's *Political Arithmetic*, pp. 93–95.

[2] This subject is especially treated in an able pamphlet by the Rev. J. Howlett (1786), who examined in detail the fluctuations of population in many different parishes. There is a curious collection of contemporary pamphlets on enclosures, written from different points of view, in the British Museum, bound up with those of Mr. Howlett; I have derived much assistance from them. Arthur Young considered enclosures one of the best means of promoting population. 'Provide new employment,' he said, 'and new hands will inevitably follow; an Act of Parliament to raise money for the improvement of a million of waste acres would increase population more than twenty score of naturalisation bills.' *Northern Tour*, iv. 414.

[3] *Parl. Hist.* xxxii. 237.

[4] Thus, in a pamphlet published in 1786 the writer complains that 'the landowner converts twenty small farms into about four large ones, and at the same time the tenants of those large farms are tied down in their leases not to plough any of the premises so let to farm, by which means [of] several hundred villages that forty years ago contained between 400 and 500 inhabitants, very few will now be found to exceed eighty and some not half that number; nay, some contain only one poor, old, decrepit man or woman hired by the occupiers of the land. . . . The young and healthy

The increase of corn produced by the enclosures for a time checked the importations, but there were many deficient harvests; prices were on an average considerably higher than in the first half of the century;[1] there was much fluctuation in the corn trade, and several temporary measures were taken. The Corn Law of 1791 was adjusted to the higher level of prices, and was somewhat less liberal than that of 1773. The importation of wheat was prevented by prohibitory duties till the home price was fifty shillings. It was only subject to a duty of sixpence a quarter when the home price was fifty-four shillings. It was subject to a duty of two shillings and sixpence when the home price ranged between these two figures. Exportation was absolutely forbidden when the home price was higher than forty-six shillings, and encouraged by a bounty up to forty-four shillings, and corresponding measures were taken to regulate the trade in other grain. But, in spite of the enclosures, the home supply soon became inadequate to the wants of the country, and the last years of the century were among the worst England had ever known. The distress produced by increasing pressure of population on means of subsistence, and by great displacements and revolutions of industry, was aggravated by a terrible period of commercial crisis and depression, a succession of extremely bad harvests and a great French war. The price of the necessaries of life rose out of all proportion to the rate of wages[2] and fluctuated with a violence that was extremely disastrous to the labouring poor. At the close of the summer of 1795 wheat was sold at the enormous price of six guineas a quarter. In 1796 it was at one time one hundred and twenty-two shillings—at another fifty-six shillings, and in the last year of the century it again rose to ninety-two shillings and seven pence a quarter.[3]

have dispersed themselves; those that could pay their passage, having transported themselves to America.' *Cursory Remarks on Enclosures by a Country Farmer*, pp. 2–5.

[1] See a table of the exports and imports for several years after 1771. Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iii. 674-676. See, too, Malthus *On Population*, c. 10.

[2] Several valuable statistics illustrating the relation between wages and the price of food at this time, will be found in Eden's *History of the Poor*, i. 383–386.

[3] Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p. 452. There is some discrepancy about the accounts of the average. Compare Eden's *History of the Poor*, app. lxxviii. Broderick's *English Land and English Landlords*, app.v. Theobald Rogers's *Six Centuries of Wages and Prices*. According to Mr. Nicholls, the average price of a quarter of wheat between 1785 and 1794 was about forty-nine shillings and ninepence, and between 1795 and 1801 eighty-seven shillings.

The poor rate, which at the beginning of the century was probably less than a million a year, was about two millions at the close of the American War, but rose to four millions before the end of the century.[1]

All the evidence we possess concurs in showing that during the first three-quarters of the century the position of the poorer agricultural classes in England was singularly favourable. The price of wheat was both low and steady. Wages, if they advanced slowly, appear to have commanded an increased proportion of the necessaries of life, and there were all the signs of growing material well-being. It was noticed that wheat bread, and that made of the finest flour, which at the beginning of the period had been confined to the upper and middle classes, had become before the close of it over the greater part of England the universal food, and that the consumption of cheese and butter in proportion to the population in many districts almost trebled. The use of tea had immensely extended, and potatoes, turnips, carrots, and cabbages, which in the early years of the century had been only raised by the spade, were now commonly raised by the plough, and entered largely into the habitual food of the working classes. Beef and mutton were eaten almost daily in villages where their use had before been hardly known, or where at most they had been eaten only once a week, and the immense consumption of animal food by the mass of the population was one of the features that most distinguished England from the Continent.[2]

[1] Broderick, p. 218. Nicholls's *History of the Poor Law*, i. 406.

[2] Dr. Price even maintained that 'it is the superior price of flesh that hurts the poor, as it forces them to consume bread only, consequently they could live better when wheat was high than they can now while it is comparatively low.' Young dissents from this opinion; but he says, 'In France, where bread, I apprehend, forms nineteen parts in twenty of the food of the people, corn, and especially wheat, is the only great object of cultivation, vines answering to our barley. In England, on the contrary, the quantity of meat, butter, and cheese consumed by all ranks of the people is immense—to a much greater value, I should suppose, than that of wheat, hence cattle to our farmers is an object as important as corn.' Young's *Political Arithmetic*, pp. 133, 158. See, too, the emphatic testimony of Sir J. Stewart, *Enquiry into the Principles of Political Economy* (1767), bk. i. c. 18, to the extent to which the English people lived on pork, beef, and mutton; the remarks of Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, bk. i. c. 8; the review of the condition of the working classes in a pamphlet by the Rev. J. Howlett, called *Enclosures a Cause of Improved Agriculture* (1787), p. 98; the detailed comparison in Arthur Young's *Tour in France* between the conditions of the English and French labourers; and the conclusion arrived at by a recent Parliamentary inquiry, quoted by Mr. Broderick, *English Land and English Landlords*, p. 215. See, too, the evidence I have myself collected, vol. i. 558–564.

During the next few years it is probable that the increase of wages was on the whole not equivalent to the increased price of the chief articles of first necessity.[1] The question, however, is extremely obscure and difficult, and it should be treated with great diffidence. Tolerably complete statistics of prices have been collected; but it is, I believe, impossible to determine with real accuracy the rate of wages. In addition to the great variations in different districts, and in winter, summer, and harvest time, it would be necessary to know what proportion of his time the labourer was unemployed; and a new and serious element of difficulty is introduced by the fact that the custom of working by the piece had become recently very general in most parts of England.[2] But whatever doubt there may be about the relative prosperity of the labourers between the American War and the War of the French Revolution, there can be no doubt that about 1792 their condition began most seriously to deteriorate. The resources derived from domestic manufactures and from commons had greatly diminished, and the enormous rise of prices had begun. Cries of distress were loud and poignant. There were several parliamentary inquiries into the causes of the high price of food and the increasing destitution of large sections of the people, and many remedies were suggested. One proposal, which received the approbation of Dr. Price and which bears a strong resemblance to a scheme of the great German statesman of our own day, was a gigantic system of State insurance, to which the whole population were to be obliged to subscribe in different proportions.[3] Friendly societies, to which labourers subscribed a certain portion of their earnings and which secured them subsistence in sickness, and independence in old age, multiplied greatly over most parts of England. They were encouraged by the Legislature, but especially by agricultural societies, which often assisted them with premiums. Schools of industry were established. There were agreements among members of Parliament and other wealthy persons to diminish the consumption of

[1] This was the opinion of the commissioner who reported on the employment of women and children in 1868 (first report). See, too, Kebbel, *The Agricultural Labourer*, pp. 40, 41. Eden's *History of the Poor*, i. 383–385.

[2] Eden's *History of the Poor*, i. 604. See also, on the great difficulty of ascertaining wages, p. 385.

[3] See the details of his scheme, which was proposed by a Mr. Acland. Eden, i. 373, 374.

wheat bread in their households. Great changes were introduced into the workhouse system. An Act was passed to relieve the families of men serving in the militia. Another Act, preventing the removal of poor persons until they had become actually chargeable upon the rates, abolished a mischievous and oppressive portion of the law of settlement which prevented the labourers from moving freely in search of employment; and relaxations were introduced into the poor law system which proved ultimately extremely disastrous. The system of regulating the rate of wages in each district by justices was very ancient, but it was in the last quarter of the century that the system of paying certain portions of those wages out of the rates came into use. The Act of 1723, which restricted parish relief to occupants of workhouses, was modified; outdoor relief was in some cases permitted; and, with the warm approbation of Pitt,[1] parochial relief was made proportionate to the number of children in a family, and a direct premium was thus offered to improvident marriages. As early as 1803, it appears from official returns that, out of a population of about 8,870,000 in England and Wales, not less than 1,234,000 persons, or nearly a seventh part, were partakers of parochial relief.[2] It was probably not till at least forty years of the nineteenth century had passed that the condition of English agricultural labourers began again seriously to improve.

The history of agriculture in the eighteenth century is on the whole a history of great progress, but the changes which were effected in this sphere were inconsiderable when compared with the enormous revolution that in the course of a few years made the cotton manufacture the greatest of English industries. At the end of the seventeenth century great quantities of cheap and graceful Indian calicoes, muslins, and chintzes were imported into England, and they found such favour that the woollen and silk manufacturers were seriously alarmed. Acts of Parliament were accordingly passed in 1700 and in 1721 absolutely prohibiting, with a very few specified exceptions, the employment of printed or dyed calicoes in England, either in dress or in furniture, and the use of any printed or dyed goods of which cotton formed any part.[3]

[1] See Pitt's remarkable speech in 1796. *Parl. Hist.* xxxii. 705–712.

[2] Wade's *History of the Middle and Working Classes*, p. 99.

[3] 11 & 12 William III. c. 10. 7 George I. c. 7.

A taste, however, had sprung up which it was found impossible to arrest, and a native manufacture began, though of more than doubtful legality. Manchester became its chief centre, and it was at last recognised, though with some restrictions, by an Act of 1736.[1] But the so-called cotton products were not entirely cotton. Only the weft, or transverse threads, were cotton. It was provided by the Act of 1736 that the warp, or longitudinal threads, must consist wholly of linen yarn; and the manufacture, though a growing one, long held a very subordinate place in British industries. The historian of the cotton manufacture has observed that at the opening of the eighteenth century, while the average export of woollen goods amounted to 2,000,000*l.*, or more than a fourth part of the total export trade of the kingdom, the export of cotton but little exceeded 23,000*l.*, and that this small sum was above the average of the next forty years. After that period there was a slight improvement, and the exports of cotton in 1750 had risen to 45,000*l.* The same writer has added that in the year 1833, while the woollen exports had increased to 6,539,731*l.*, the cotton exports had risen to not less than 18,486,400*l.*[2]

I do not propose to describe in any detail the succession of closely connected inventions by which this great change was effected, still less to enter into the difficult questions that have been raised regarding the priority of conception among the inventors. It will be sufficient to say that towards the middle of the century the current of taste and fashion had begun to move in the direction of cotton goods, and within a few years, and as a consequence of the increased demand, a number of premature, abortive, or partially successful attempts were made to economise the labour and accelerate the rate of their production. During the first half of the century all cotton yarn was spun in single threads by the hand, and although the industry was pursued in countless farmhouses over England the supply of cotton yarn continued below the demand, and much below the quantity which it was in the power of the weavers to manufacture. The invention of the fly-shuttle by Kay of Bury, in

[1] Baines's *History of the Cotton Manufacture*, pp. 166, 167. McCulloch's *Account of British Empire*, i. 673.

[2] Ibid. p. 112. In 1882 the total export of woollen and worsted manufacture was 22,167,279*l.*; that of cotton, 75,796,205*l.* See Martin's *Statesman's Year Book*.

1738, aggravated the difficulty, for it about doubled the rapidity of the process of weaving. About 1764, however, Hargreaves invented the spinning-jenny, by which, through the instrumentality of a wheel, a number of spindles could be simultaneously worked. When the machine was first framed, it was enabled to work simultaneously eight spindles, and it was soon so improved that a single spinner could spin at once more than a hundred threads of cotton.[1]

Another enormous improvement was effected almost at the same time by the method of spinning by rollers, which were moved at first by the hand, but soon after by water. The first conception of this process has been attributed both to John Wyatt and Lewis Paul.[2] A few years later, unsuccessful attempts were made by Thomas Highs to introduce it into use, but it was reserved for Arkwright to perfect the machine and to make it for the first time the great instrument in the cotton manufacture. His patent was taken out in 1769. In 1774 an Act of Parliament was passed authorising the new manufacture of goods made entirely of cotton, but imposing a duty of threepence per square yard upon them when they were printed, painted, or stained with colours.[3]

Many subsidiary but most wonderful inventions, accomplished within the last quarter of the eighteenth century, completed the transformation. The carding cylinder made it possible to perform by machinery an indispensable portion of the manufacture which had hitherto been performed by hand; the mule of Crompton, so called from its combining the principles of the rolling-machine and the spinning-jenny, immensely improved and accelerated the process of spinning, and it was carried by a succession of inventions to an almost miraculous perfection; the application by the French chemist Berthollet of the newly invented acid chlorine to the purpose of bleaching cotton cloth shortened that work from many weeks to a few hours; the invention of cylinder-printing in 1785 multiplied about a hundredfold the rapidity with which calico-printing could be accomplished; the power-loom which Cartwright in-

[1] Baines's *History of the Cotton Manufacture*, pp. 155–159.

[2] The claims of Wyatt will be found stated at length in Baines's *History of the Cotton Manufacture*, and those of Paul in French's *Life and Times of Crompton*. Guest, in his history of the cotton trade, has mentioned the claims of Highs.

[3] 14 George III. c. 72.

vented in the same year, and which subsequent inventors greatly improved, gave a new impulse to weaving as decisive as that which Hargreaves and Crompton had given to spinning; and finally in 1789 and 1790 water-power was discarded and the whole manufacture passed under the mighty empire of steam. The bewildering magnitude of the change that was effected is sufficiently shown by the fact that through successive improvements in machinery not less than 2,200 spindles of cotton have been managed by a single spinner.[1]

These are but the most conspicuous of a long series of mechanical inventions which in a few years made the cotton manufacture of Great Britain the greatest in the world. Most of them passed through more than one phase, and were at first but partially successful; most of them were the work of poor and almost uneducated men, and it is melancholy to observe how many of the inventors, to whom the pre-eminence of English wealth is mainly due, lived and died in poverty, or were exposed to fierce storms of opposition. It is not surprising that it should have been so, for the inventions that have been described being mainly inventions for economising human labour and replacing it by machinery, their immediate effect was necessarily to restrict employment. Kay, the inventor of the flying shuttle, was so persecuted that he left England and established himself in Paris. Hargreaves' house at Blackburn was broken open by the mob. His machines were shattered; he was obliged to fly from his native town, and he took refuge in Nottingham. In 1779, during a period of temporary distress, cotton spinning was almost annihilated in the district of Blackburn by the madness of the mob, who traversed many miles of country, destroying all spinning-jennies with more than twenty spindles, all carding-engines, all water-frames, every machine turned by horses or water. The spinning and calico-printing machinery of Peel, the grandfather of the statesman, was thrown into the river at Altham, and the great manufacturer, finding even his life insecure, retired to Burton, where he built another cotton-mill on the banks of the Trent. A large mill built by Arkwright near Chorley was destroyed by the mob

[1] Baines, p. 202.

in spite of the presence of a powerful body of police and military.[1]

Yet it is certain that very few inventions have in their ultimate effects so largely increased the amount of employment. The number of persons engaged in England in the cotton manufacture was estimated at the beginning of the reign of George III. at about 40,000. In 1785 Pitt reckoned it at 80,000. After this time it increased far more rapidly, and in 1831 it had risen, according to the estimate of M'Culloch, to 833,000.[2] In the first fifty years of the eighteenth century the quantity of cotton imported into England a little more than doubled, and the value of the cotton exports did not quite double. In the last twenty years of the century the former multiplied by eight, and the latter by fifteen and a half.[3]

The prominence Manchester had attained before the great inventions I have described, as a centre of manufacture, enabled it to reap the chief advantages of this most marvellous progress. Other centres, indeed, of the new industry were established in Nottinghamshire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, and the West Riding of Yorkshire, as well as in Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire in Scotland. But Lancashire was from the first the pre-eminent home of the cotton manufacture, and its astonishing development is one of the most important facts in the English history of the eighteenth century. Water-power, coal, accumulated capital, and manufacturing enterprise, the great seaport of Liverpool, and an easy access to the iron fields of the neighbouring counties were the chief elements of its progress. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the whole population of this great county was computed at only 166,200, less than a third part of the present population of Liverpool. At the end of the century it had risen to 672,000.[4] In the census of 1881 it is reckoned at 3,454,441.

The immense extension of the cotton manufacture, though the most remarkable, is but one of the events which make the latter half of the eighteenth century the most memorable period in the industrial history of England. To this period also belongs

[1] Baines's *History of the Cotton Manufacture*, pp. 117, 151, 159, 160.
[2] Ibid. pp. 218, 219, 360.
[3] Ibid. p. 216.
[4] Ibid. p. 360.

the great English manufacture of earthenware. The Chelsea china, which attained its perfection in the first half of the century, was chiefly due to the skill of French refugees, and two brothers from Holland named Elers established during the same period a small manufacture of earthenware in Staffordshire. They met with much opposition, and at last left the country; but the potteries continued, though they produced only the coarsest ware. In all other kinds French and Dutch earthenwares, by virtue of their indisputable superiority, completely dominated in England until Josiah Wedgwood turned the scale. This great man, like so many of the inventors of the eighteenth century, sprang from the humblest position. He was the youngest of thirteen children in a family which had been long employed in the potteries. His work in the trade was at first of the lowest kind; but he gradually rose into partnership with other workmen; began business on his own account in 1759, and soon after invented a new kind of earthenware which, by its superior durability and texture, almost drove foreign competitors from England and made its way to the most distant quarters of the globe. Before the close of the century it was stated that five-sixths of the quantity made was exported. The cameos, intaglios, busts, bas-reliefs, medallions, and other similar works produced in the Wedgwood factories formed a new branch of English art, and exhibited a designing power of almost the highest kind. Some of them were designed by Flaxman. Some were imitated from the Etruscan vases which Sir William Hamilton had just brought under English notice; but the new industry in all its parts was mainly due to the extraordinary genius of a single man. Of its industrial importance it is sufficient to say that in 1785 Wedgwood stated before a committee of the House of Commons that there were already from 15,000 to 20,000 persons employed directly in the potteries, while a far larger number were engaged in digging coal for them and in raising, preparing, and transporting from distant parts of the kingdom the clay and flints which they required.[1]

Staffordshire now ranks fifth in population among the counties of England. It owes its peculiar density partly to its potteries, but still more to its great mines and manufactures of iron.

[1] Macpherson iii. 380–383. Meteyard's *Life of Wedgwood*.

In the beginning of the eighteenth century its manufacture of nails and utensils of iron was already noted;[1] but the great development of this industry belongs to a much later period. In spite of the enormous quantity of iron which lies beneath the British soil, the manufacture during the first half of the century was small and languid. As long as the process of smelting iron could only be accomplished by wood fuel, it was almost confined to thickly wooded counties, and ironworks proved so fatal to the English woods that the Legislature more than once interposed to restrain them. It is a curious fact that the process of smelting iron by pit coal had been discovered as early as the reign of James I. by a natural son of Lord Dudley, who took out a patent for it in his father's name. He met, however, with fierce opposition from rival manufacturers; his works were destroyed by rioters; a long series of private calamities and the confusion of the civil wars soon followed, and the newly discovered art, which was destined to be of such transcendent importance, took no root and appears to have been entirely lost. It was revived about 1735 by Darby of Colebrook, and from that time it rapidly spread. The works which had formerly been chiefly carried on in Sussex passed to districts in the neighbourhood of coal, and a new impulse was given to the manufacture by Cort of Gosport, who in 1783 and 1784 introduced the process of puddling and rolling iron. The great period of the English iron manufacture was still to come; but even in the eighteenth century the progress was only less than in the cotton manufacture. In 1740 the quantity of pig-iron made in England and Wales was estimated at but 17,000 tons; in 1796 it was 125,000 tons; in 1806 it was 250,000 tons.[2] Birmingham, Sheffield, and a crowd of other towns in which the manufacture was pursued advanced with gigantic strides in population and influence.

This progress would have been impossible if there had not been greatly increased facilities for the transport of coal. The growth of manufactures both implied and stimulated the improvement of roads, and it also produced those vast works of

[1] Chamberlayne's *Present State of Great Britain*, 1710, p. 19.

[2] M'Culloch's *Account of the British Empire*, i. 606, 607. Fairbairn's *Iron Manufacture*.

inland navigation which distinguished the last forty years of the century. Canals with locks had long been common on the Continent. Italy and Holland in this respect led the way, and several other countries had followed in their steps; Peter the Great in Russia, and Charles XII. in Sweden, began great works of inland navigation which were continued by their successors. In France a canal uniting the Seine and the Loire was begun under Henry IV. and completed under Lewis XIII., and the great Languedoc Canal, connecting the Mediterranean with the Atlantic was regarded as one of the supreme achievements of the reign of Lewis XIV. England, however, lagged strangely behind, till the intelligent munificence of the Duke of Bridgewater and the genius of the great engineer Brindley began the network of canals which in a few years intersected the whole of her manufacturing districts. The canal, seven miles long, opened in 1761 between Manchester and the coal-mines at Worsley, was constructed at the sole expense of the Duke of Bridgewater, and the aqueduct by which Brindley conducted it at a height of thirty-nine feet over the river Irwell was regarded as one of the most stupendous feats of engineering ever performed in England. The immediate effect of this first canal was to diminish the price of coal in Manchester by one half, and its extension to the Mersey at Runcorn placed Manchester and Liverpool in easy communication, and enormously stimulated the prosperity of both.

Brindley died in 1772, at the early age of fifty-six, but he had designed much more than he lived to accomplish, and the impulse which he had given continued. It is true that, like all other great improvements in locomotion, canals found their sceptics and their opponents. The proposed aqueduct over the Irwell was ridiculed by engineers as a mere 'castle in the air;' and when the feasibility of the schemes of Brindley was proved there were not wanting those who denounced them as mischievous. Canals, it was predicted, would diminish or ruin the noble English breed of draught-horses; would injure the coasting trade and therefore the navy of England; would sink vast sums in unprofitable enterprises; would destroy great quantities of land which might be better employed in producing corn. But the manufacturers clearly saw the capital importance

of the new waterways; and, by furnishing an easy mode of transporting manure, canals became one of the great means of the improvement of agriculture.

The eighteenth-century movement for the construction of canals has now receded into the background, eclipsed by the more gigantic and astonishing enterprise which has made it possible to traverse on the wings of steam almost every district in the island. The earlier enterprise, however, was unlike anything that had been before seen in England, and it excited a wonder and enthusiasm which even railways have scarcely surpassed. Miss Aiken described in graceful verse the new charm which was added to the English landscape by the silver line of placid water which relieved and brightened the barren and gloomy moor, while white sails might be seen gleaming through the dusky trees, or moving like swans in their flight, far above the traveller's head. In 1790 a vast design of Brindley was accomplished by the completion of the chain of works which connected the four great ports of London, Bristol, Liverpool, and Hull; and in the same year, after the labour of twenty-two years, the canal was opened which connected the Forth with the Clyde. It was pronounced to be superior to every other work of the kind in Europe, and it raised vessels capable of navigating the ocean to the height of 156 feet above the level of the sea, and, in one of the aqueducts, sixty-five feet above the natural river. About the time when the great war began, speculations in canals had assumed dimensions which almost foreshadowed the railway mania of the nineteenth century. In the four years which ended in 1794 it was noticed that not less than eighty-one Acts of Parliament were passed for navigable canals and improvements in inland navigation, and it was computed that before the rise of railways not less than 2,600 miles of navigable canal had been constructed in England, as well as 276 in Ireland and 225 in Scotland, and that about 50,000,000*l.* had been invested in their construction.[1]

But the greatest of all the industrial inventions of the

[1] Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iv. 203, 257, 282, 283, 300. Philips's *History of Inland Navigation*. Smiles' *Lives of the Engineers: Life of Brindley*. There is a good chapter in Philips on the history of Continental canals, and I have also derived some information on this subject from Andreossy, *Hist. du Canal du Midi* (an. viii.)

eighteenth century, when measured by its future consequence, was the improvement of the steam-engine by Watt. The expansive power of steam had indeed been long noticed. A rotatory machine moved by steam is mentioned by Hero of Alexandria 120 years before the Christian era, and after a long interval the possibility of applying the force of steam to practical purposes appears to have struck several independent thinkers of the seventeenth century. A French engineer named De Caus, an Italian philosopher named Branca, the celebrated Marquis of Worcester, and the great French mathematician, Denis Papin, had all contributed something to the discovery; and just before the close of the seventeenth century the model of a steam engine for raising water from mines was presented to the Royal Society by an English engineer named Savery. In 1705, however, the machine of Savery was superseded by another which was more efficient and economical, invented by a blacksmith named Newcomen; and from this time the use of the steam-engine in collieries appears to have been habitual. In 1761 a patent was granted to Jonathan Greenal of Parr, in the county of Lancaster, for a newly invented fire-engine for draining mines, coal-pits, and lands from water;[1] and two years later an engine was cast in Colebrookdale which was said to be the largest ever produced, and which was expected to raise at a stroke 307 cwt. of water.[2]

James Watt, to whom the complete transformation of the steam-engine is due, was born at Greenock in 1736. His father was a carpenter and shipwright in very modest circumstances, and he himself for several years showed little promise of greatness. He was a slow, shy, plodding, self-concentrated boy, with weak health and low spirits, entirely without brilliancy and fire, but with an evident natural turn for mechanics. When he was nineteen he was sent to London to learn the trade of making mathematical instruments, and about two years later he settled in Glasgow, where the great qualities of his genius speedily developed. Among his warmest and most faithful friends was the philosopher Black, whose recent and splendid discovery of latent heat largely assisted Watt in his experiments. It was in

[1] *Annual Register*, 1761, p. 73.

[2] Ibid. 1763, p. 66. See, too, the description of another great steam-engine, ibid. 1768, p. 62.

1763, when repairing for the University of Glasgow a defective model of Newcomen's engine, that Watt first steadily directed his mind to the improvement of the steam-engine, and he introduced a succession of changes which soon altered its whole character. By the device of a separate condenser he saved an enormous waste of heat, and therefore of fuel, which had hitherto done much to make the engine unprofitable, and he at the same time vastly increased its force by making steam instead of atmospheric pressure the motive power of the downward movement of the piston. In the earlier engines steam had been employed only for the purpose of creating by its condensation a vacuum, and thus producing the pressure of air upon the piston by which the working power of the machine was directly effected.

I cannot undertake to describe the succession of mechanical improvements introduced by Watt. His first patent for his engine was obtained in 1769, and, in spite of considerable opposition, it was extended in 1775 for twenty-five years. His career, though at last crowned with splendid success and a large fortune, was full of difficulty and opposition, and it was darkened by weak health and extreme constitutional despondency. For many years his works were unremunerative; the burden of debt hung heavily upon him, and when success arrived he was exposed to much opposition from rival inventors, to shameful attempts to defraud him of his dues, and to at least seven years of harassing litigation. It was his good fortune, however, to be early supported by Dr. John Roebuck, a man of singular enterprise and ability, who carried on large ironworks on the Carron, in Stirlingshire, and afterwards, when Roebuck had been ruined, to be taken into partnership by Matthew Boulton, the head of the great ironworks at Soho, near Birmingham.

Assisted by the capital and labour at the disposal of a great manufacturer, the most splendid inventive genius of the eighteenth century had full scope to display itself. For many years, however, after the first invention of Watt, the steam-engine seemed likely to hold only a very subsidiary place among the inventions of the eighteenth century. It was an instrument of admirable power and efficiency, but its only motion was vertical, and its utility was almost confined to the single purpose of pumping up water. Sometimes, no doubt, the water thus pumped up was

employed to turn a wheel, and steam thus occasionally came into use in manufactures when a natural current could not be obtained, but in general it was employed only in mining and drainage. The idea, however, was evidently spreading among inventors that new motions, and therefore new applications, might be given to the machine; and there were several independent inventors, though it was reserved for Watt most fully and most completely to succeed. After many years of patient labour he succeeded in giving to the steam-engine a rotatory motion and a parallel motion, and, by the regulating centrifugal force of the governor, in placing the machine in all its various and combined motions under the complete control of the mechanic. A power of enormous force was thus called into being, which could be applied with the utmost facility and the most absolute certainty in the most various directions. Steam locomotion, though it was more than once suggested, projected, attempted, and even in some small degree accomplished in the eighteenth century, was not fully achieved till a few years later; but from the time of the later inventions of Watt it had become a certainty. Gradually, during the last twenty years of the century, the new engines came into use as the motive power in manufactures, performing with enormously increased strength and efficiency what had formerly been done by the human muscles, by animals, by wind, or by water. No other invention since the discovery of printing has affected so widely, so variously, and so powerfully the interests of mankind.[1]

Such were the chief inventions that transformed England from a country which was essentially agricultural into a country which was essentially manufacturing, and produced in a few generations those vast accumulations of wealth and those vast agglomerations of population on which so great a part of its modern character depends. It is a superficial and erroneous view which seeks the consequences of such changes only in industrial and political spheres. The conditions under which men live affect the whole type of their characters, and inventions that are purely mechanical ultimately influence profoundly both opinions

[1] See Lardner on the Steam-Engine. The Lives of Watt by Muirhead and by Smiles. Beckmann's *History of Inventions*. *Encyclopædia Brit.* art. 'Steam-Engines.'

and morals. To trace with any completeness the vast and multifarious consequences of the manufacturing development of England would require in itself a long book; and all that can here be done is to sketch a meagre outline.

The first and most obvious fact is that the triumphant issue of the great French War was largely, if not mainly, due to the cotton-mill and the steam-engine. England might well place the statues of Watt and Arkwright by the side of those of Wellington and Nelson, for had it not been for the wealth which they created she could never have supported an expenditure which, during the last ten years of the war, averaged more than eighty-four millions a year, and rose in 1814 to one hundred and six millions, nor could she have endured without bankruptcy a national debt which had risen in 1816 to eight hundred and eighty-five millions.[1]

The magnitude of the resources which she discovered in the time of her deepest need is sufficiently shown by the fact that the cotton exports alone during the period of the war, from 1793 to 1815, amounted in value to 250,000,000*l.*[2] There was hardly a branch of manufacture in which production and profits were not suddenly and enormously increased by the application of steam, and under the influence of the inventions of the eighteenth century the coal-fields and iron-beds of England gave her a new and mighty element of power and ascendency in the world.

The gains in the first stage of the progress were naturally the most gigantic. It has been noticed that when Pitt established the legacy duty he thought it absurd to provide for a legacy duty on properties above a million; but in half a century the scale of fortunes had so changed that scarcely a year passed in which such properties were not bequeathed.[3] The few great bankers, the few rich merchants of the eighteenth century formed a wholly insignificant counterpoise to the vast balance of wealth which was then in the hands of the landed interest. The small place given to them in the estimate of Gregory King at the end of the seventeenth century shows conclusively how little importance the class had as yet ac-

[1] Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, pp. 480, 482.

[2] Baines's *History of the Cotton Manufacture*, p. 504.

[3] See *England as It is*, by William Johnston, c. xii.

quired. But the manufacturing aristocracy produced by cotton and by iron soon became an important political element in the country, possessing as great employers of labour a natural influence hardly less than that of the largest owners of the soil.

The effects of manufactures on the happiness and prosperity of the masses of the English people have been more various, more chequered, and more contested. It is idle, however, to dispute the advantages of inventions which have incalculably increased both production and employment, and have at the same time replaced by machinery the most burdensome forms of human toil. Millions of men and women are now living in England who could not possibly have subsisted there but for the great inventions that have been described; and in spite of many fluctuations, the wages of this vastly increased population have usually been higher, not merely absolutely but also in their purchasing power, than those which were earned before these inventions had arisen. The multiplication and the diversity of possible employments have been of incalculable advantage to the poor, and manufactures more than any other single influence have enabled poor men of energy and skill to rise above the positions in which they were born. Examples of such a rise were, of course, most numerous in the earlier days of the great manufactures; but in the skilled artisans the manufacturing system still produces a large class whose general well-being is probably unequalled by any corresponding class on the Continent, and who in intelligence and energy form one of the most valuable elements of English life. Tracts of England which had formerly been almost waste and barbarous have been made prosperous and wealthy. Agriculture has started into a new perfection, in response to the vast demand for agricultural products which the great manufacturing centres have made. The high rate of wages in manufacturing towns has reacted upon the condition of the agricultural labourers and raised the standard of wages in the surrounding country. Capital, skill, and energy acquired in manufacturing enterprise have ultimately passed largely into country life; and the genius of Watt and Stephenson has brought distant markets almost to the doors of the farmer. Cheap clothing of calico and cotton, cheap

tools, cheap means of transporting himself and the products which he wishes either to buy or to sell, cheap methods of communicating with his absent friends, and a cheap press to instruct and to amuse, are among the many blessings which machinery has bestowed upon the agricultural poor, while great centres of intelligence and energy have multiplied over the land and diffused their intellectual and moral influence through the remotest districts.

Human progress, however, rarely means more than a surplus of advantages over evils, and the evils that accompanied the sudden growth of manufactures were very great. We have already seen its powerful effects in the destruction of small farms. Partly by ruining the domestic manufactures and compelling the enclosure of the commons, which alone enabled in many districts the poor farmer to subsist; partly by the temptation of higher wages, which has been steadily drawing the poorer population of the country to the great towns—manufactures have contributed most powerfully to give English country life its present type. In spite of the extraordinary rapidity with which the inventions in manufactures succeeded one another, it was some years before the factory system obtained a complete ascendency, and each stage of its triumphant march was marked by the ruin of industrious men. Not only the manufactures pursued in the farmhouse, but also those on a somewhat larger scale pursued in the towns, were destroyed. The woollen manufacture in the eighteenth century was carried on by great numbers of small masters in their own homes. They usually employed about ten journeymen and apprentices, who were bound to them by long contracts, who boarded in the master's house, and who worked together with him and under his immediate superintendence. In Leeds and its neighbourhood in 1806, there were no less than 3,500 of these establishments. But the gigantic factory, with its vast capital, its costly machinery, and its extreme subdivision of labour, soon swept them away.[1] Handloom-weaving—once a flourishing trade—long maintained a desperate competition against the factories, and as late as 1830 a very competent observer described the multitude of weavers, who were living in the great cities, in

[1] See Howell's *Conflicts of Capital and Labour*, pp. 84-88.

houses utterly unfit for human habitation, working fourteen hours a day and upwards, and earning only from five to eight shillings a week.[1]

The sanitary neglect, the demoralisation, the sordid poverty, the acute and agonising want prevailing among great sections of the population of our manufacturing towns during the fifty or sixty years that followed the inventions of Arkwright and Crompton can hardly be exaggerated. Human nature has seldom shown itself in a more unlovely form than in those crowded and pestilential alleys, in that dark and sulphurous atmosphere. The transition from one form of industry to another, the violent fluctuations of wages and of work, the sudden disruption of old ties and habits and associations, the transfer of thousands of female spinners from their country homes to the crowded factory, the vast masses of ignorance and pauperism that were attracted to the towns by vague prospects of employment, have all led to a misery and demoralisation of an extreme character. The transitions of industry are always painful, but very few transitions have been so much so as that in the closing years of the eighteenth century. No system of national education had prepared the people for the change. The settled conditions of labour, which had formerly produced much of the effect of education upon character, were destroyed, and the increase of the great towns under the stimulus of the new inventions was so portentously rapid that it utterly outstripped the efforts of religious and philanthropical organisation. Two very unfortunate influences also concurred to aggravate the situation. The enormous rise in the price of corn accompanying the great French War rendered the period of transition peculiarly trying, and the great increase of population in Ireland produced a large Irish immigration, which not only lowered the wages of the English labourer, but also most seriously and permanently depressed his standard of comfort.[2]

It was evident, indeed, that the new conditions of labour

[1] Kay's *Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes*, p. 44. Wade's *History of the Middle and Working Classes*, p. 571. Ure's *Philosophy of Manufacture*, pp. 334–336.

[2] See a powerful statement of the effects of Irish emigration on the English working classes in Kay's *Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes* (1832).

were in some important respects much less favourable to moral purity and development than those which preceded them, and also that they were calculated to produce serious social and political danger. The system, which is rapidly spreading through all industry, of vast undertakings supported by small profits on an immense sale, inevitably tends to wider divisions of classes and greater contrasts of wealth and poverty. Whenever an industry passes from the restraint of strong custom and regulating laws into a condition of highly stimulated and unshackled competition, production is increased, prices are lowered, general well-being is augmented, but the relative strength and weakness of individuals, and the relative positions of different classes, are more distinctly separated. Economical and material progress is not always accompanied with a corresponding social and moral improvement, and there is reason to believe that in the early days of the manufacturing system the disparity between them was unusually great. A very intelligent observer named Francis Place, who rose himself from the position of a working man, and who devoted much research to the changes of manners and morals that had occurred during the first great period of manufacturing development, has described in a pamphlet written in 1829, and in evidence before a Parliamentary Committee in 1835, the changes which had taken place within his recollection. The most important was the great difference in manners and morals that had arisen between different classes of workmen. When he wrote, he said, the difference in these respects between the skilled workman of London and the common labourer was as great as the difference between the workman and his employer. Drunkenness had diminished. The best-paid workmen were as a rule the least dissolute, and as the old members of the class dropped off, the improvement became more marked. But this difference had been almost wholly created within a single lifetime. He could remember when there was no appreciable distinction of morals and manners between the different sorts of London workmen. Few could write. Very few ever looked into a book. Mechanics' institutes, book clubs, and a crowd of institutions which produce educated tastes among the working classes, were as yet unborn. The amusements of all grades of workmen in London were of

the same type—drinking and gambling in the public-house, where they held their clubs and played a game of chance or skill for a pot of beer or a quartern of gin; songs and ballads of revolting indecency; a few tea-gardens usually thronged with prostitutes and thieves; duck hunts in the great ponds to the east of Tottenham Court Road; occasional badger-baiting, dog-fighting, or bull-baiting. In general, he observed, the most skilful workmen, as they had most money to spend, were the most dissolute.[1]

These remarks referred to the workmen of London, but there can be little doubt that the picture was equally applicable to those of the great manufacturing towns at the period of which I am writing. Under the excellent management and discipline of the great factories, a standard of comfort and well-being has now been attained which is beyond all praise, and high wages, combined with many opportunities of improvement and saving, have raised the level of civilisation in the operative class far above that of the eighteenth century. But the many factory laws which it was found necessary to enact after careful Parliamentary inquiries, and at the very time when public feeling in England was running most strongly in the direction of unrestricted industry and trade, show clearly how serious and how incontestable were the evils originally connected with the system. The most serious was the constant employment of very young children, in work so severe and prolonged that it must have almost inevitably ruined them for life. Some foreign writers have attributed this evil to Pitt. They say that he once received a deputation of manufacturers who complained of the depression of their trade, and that he dismissed them with the terrible advice, 'Take the children.'[2] The story is, I believe, without authority, and the system of employing children in great numbers had sprung up before any recorded speech of Pitt upon the subject. It was an inevitable consequence of the in-

[1] Place *On the Improvement of the Working People*. There is an abstract of his evidence before the Parliamentary Committee, in Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, pp. 683–685. See, too, the curious collection of documents relating to the history of manners, made by Place, and now in the British Museum, Add. MSS. 27, 825.

[2] This statement is made by Michelet, *La Femme*, and repeated by Jules Simon, *L'Ouvrière*. See the very emphatic contradiction of it in Lord Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iv. 405, 406.

troduction of machinery, which, needing no physical force, made cheap child-labour available. It is, however, true that Pitt left the enormous abuse of child-labour which grew up in his time entirely unrestricted by law, while he strongly urged the propriety of turning the industry of children to profit. In a speech on the depressed condition of the labouring classes he observed: 'Experience has already shown how much could be done by the industry of children, and the advantages of early employing them in such branches of manufactures as they are capable to execute. The extension of schools of industry is also an object of material importance. If anyone would take the trouble to compute the amount of all the earnings of the children who are already educated in this manner, he would be surprised when he came to consider the weight which their support by their own labours took off the country, and the addition which, by the fruits of their toil and the habits to which they were formed, was made to its internal opulence.'[1]

Within carefully guarded limits, child-labour is no more to be objected to in manufactures than in agriculture, but in the early days of the factory system these limits were utterly discarded. In the very infancy of the system it became the custom of the master manufacturers to contract with the managers of workhouses throughout England and of the charities of Scotland, to send their young children to the factories of the great towns. Many thousands of children between the ages of six and ten were thus sent, absolutely uncared for and unprotected, and left at the complete disposal of masters who often had not a single thought except speedily to amass a fortune, and who knew that if the first supply of infant-labour was used up there was still much more to be obtained. Thousands of children at this early age might be found working in the factories of England and Scotland, usually from twelve to fourteen, sometimes even fifteen or sixteen, hours a day, not unfrequently during the greater part of the night. Destitute or drunken or unnatural parents made it a regular system to raise money by hiring out their children from six, sometimes from five, years old, by written contracts and for long periods. In one case brought before Parliament, a gang of these children

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxii. 710.

was put up for sale among a bankrupt's effects, and publicly advertised as part of the property. In another, an agreement was disclosed between a London parish and a Lancashire manufacturer in which it was stipulated that with every twenty sound children one idiot should be taken. Instances of direct and aggravated cruelty to particular children were probably rare, and there appears a general agreement of evidence that they were confined to the small factories. But labour prolonged for periods that were utterly inconsistent with the health of children was general. In forty-two out of forty-three factories at Manchester, it was stated before the Parliamentary Committee in 1816 that the actual hours of daily work ranged from twelve to fourteen, and in one case they were fourteen and a half. Even as late as 1840, when the most important manufactures had been regulated by law, Lord Ashley was able to show that boys employed in the carpet manufacture at Kidderminster were called up at three and four in the morning, and kept working sixteen or eighteen hours; that children of five years old were engaged in the unhealthy trade of pin-making, and were kept at work from six in the morning to eight at night.[1]

It was one of the effects of the immense development of the cotton manufacture, that negro slavery in America, which at the time of Washington seemed likely to be extinguished by an easy and natural process, at once assumed gigantic dimensions. It was hardly more horrible, however, than the white slavery which, for some years after the establishment of the factory system, prevailed both in England and on the Continent. Some of the great manufacturers were fully sensible of the evil. To the first Sir Robert Peel, who was among the greatest of them, is chiefly due the first Factory Act, which was carried in 1802; and the Ashtons, the Ashworths, and the Gregs were early noted

[1] The facts relating to the factory system will be found in the reports of several parliamentary committees on the subject, and in the debates on the different factory laws. See too Alfred's *History of the Factory Movement*; the correspondence between Senior and Horner 'on the Factory Act' (1837); the published speeches of Lord Ashley; Kay's *Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes*; Bulwer's *England and the English*, book ii. ch. v.; and the skilful analysis of the evidence taken before the Factory Commissioners, drawn up in the interests of the manufacturers in 1834. On the foreign factories see a report of Ch. Dupin on the labour of children, laid before the French House of Peers in 1840 and 1841, and Gillet, *Sur l'Emploi des Enfants* (1840).

for the conspicuous and enlightened humanity which they displayed in the management of their factories. But the struggle for the Factory Acts was on the whole carried on in the teeth of fierce class opposition, as well as strong intellectual and political tendencies, and the success of those Acts will furnish one of the most curious and instructive pages in the history of the nineteenth century.

In some most essential respects the growth of the great manufacturing towns was altering the character of England. For many generations after the Revolution, the county members formed especially the independent, and also the mobile element in the House of Commons; and in the Reform plans of both Pitts an increase of county representation was put forward as the most efficacious means of infusing into it health, purity, and energy. The movement of progress and of change in all its forms was very languid, and the feeling of the country was essentially conservative. The English Constitution, as it appears in the writings of Burke, and as it in fact existed for many generations after the Revolution of 1688, was a thing which owed its excellence quite as much to the singular union in the English character of self-reliance, practical good sense, love of compromise, and dislike to theoretical, experimental, or organic change, as to any law that can be found in the Statute-book. The patient acquiescence in all kinds of theoretical irregularities and anomalies provided they worked well; the reverence for habit, precedent, and tradition; the dislike to pushing principles to their extreme logical consequences, and the essential moderation which the English people have almost always shown even in the periods of their greatest excitement, have been main causes of the longevity and the reality of their freedom. It is a memorable fact that there are few periods in English history in which so many important laws were made for the protection of religious, political, and individual liberty as during the great Royalist reaction of the Restoration;[1] while, as Burke has abundantly shown, the prescriptive, hereditary, and conservative character of the English monarchy was never more carefully and elaborately asserted than by the

[1] See a very remarkable enumeration of these measures in Buckle's *Hist. of Civilisation*, i. 350–353.

statesmen who made the Revolution of 1688. The sound practical judgment and the systematic moderation of the Governments which carried England safely through the long period of a foreign dynasty and of a disputed succession, have been abundantly shown in the present work. Nor were these qualities confined to the eighteenth century. The intelligent middle classes, who were the true centre of political power in that golden period of the Constitution between the Reform Bill of 1832 and the Reform Bill of 1867, eminently possessed them. The conduct of the Whig Ministers in the years that immediately followed their great Reform Bill is well deserving of the study of all political thinkers. Sir Robert Peel, who led the Opposition, possessed an administrative skill which none of his contemporaries and scarcely any of his predecessors could rival, and, with a sagacity that he did not always show, he at once accepted the Reform Bill he had so strenuously opposed, and raised the banner of administrative reform. There were not wanting those behind the Whig Ministers who urged them passionately, to meet this policy by the obvious party device of a further movement for organic change, and availing themselves of a tide of public feeling, which had almost risen to the height of revolution, to attack the House of Lords and to effect a complete transformation of the Constitution. Nothing, in my opinion, in the whole course of English parliamentary history is more deserving of admiration, nothing is more characteristic of the best traditions of English public life, than the firmness and the patriotism with which the Whig leaders resisted the temptation, repressed the revolutionary tendency among their followers, applied themselves to calming passions which were becoming dangerous to the historic framework of English government, and risked all their popularity by effecting one of the most needed but most unpopular of administrative changes, the reform of the old poor law.

How far the spirit which produced such a course of policy continues may well be doubted. The old elements of the English character remain, but their proportions are differently mixed. The habits and mental tendencies of a people who are essentially agricultural will always differ from those of a people where the predominant political power rests mainly in great

towns, and this, through the astonishing growth of manufactures, has now become pre-eminently the character of England. It has been noticed that of towns of more than forty thousand inhabitants there are now fifty-five in Great Britain and Ireland, twenty-eight in France, twenty-four in Italy, twenty-one in Prussia, fourteen in Russia, and six in Austria.[1] In France revolutionary movements in the great towns have often reversed by violence the conservative tendencies in the country. In England the growing influence of great towns is shown in a gradual modification of the type and habits of political thought. When opinions are formed and discussed by great masses of men, and especially by men of the artisan class, when they are constantly made the subjects of debate before large and popular audiences and in a spirit of fierce controversy, the empire of habit, tradition, and reverence will naturally diminish; anomalies and irregularities of all kinds will be keenly felt; institutions will be judged only by their superficial aspects and by their immediate and most obvious consequences; remote and indirect consequences, however real and grave, will have little influence on opinion; nothing that is complex or subtle in its character and nothing that is not susceptible of an immediate popular and plausible treatment is regarded; and the appetite for experiment, for change, for the excitement of political agitation, steadily grows. The alteration of mental habits partly due to the great increase of town life, and partly also to other causes, may, I think, be clearly traced, stealing over the English character. The political pulse beats more quickly. A touch of fever has passed into the body politic, and the Constitution is moving more rapidly through its successive phases of transformation and of decay.

The most serious political questions that have agitated England in the nineteenth century have all been very largely affected by the great industrial inventions of the eighteenth century. It was these inventions that gave parliamentary reform its supreme and pressing importance. The anomaly of rising and flourishing towns without representatives while decayed and deserted villages sent one or two members to Parliament was indeed not new, but it was the vast and sudden transfer of population and wealth to the northern half of

[1] Cunningham's *Conditions of Social Well-being* (1878).

England and the immense multiplication and aggrandisement of manufacturing towns which made a plan of representation, that had been scarcely altered for two centuries and a half, completely inadequate for some of the chief purposes of representative government. Unfortunately, too, this great alteration in the disposition of population and power took place at a time when that indiscriminate dread of all change, which the French Revolution had produced, was at its height, and all proposals to mitigate the disparity by transferring a few seats from disfranchised boroughs to the large towns were rejected. Great masses of unrepresented opinion grew up in the island, and the consequence was that mighty wave of popular feeling which carried the Reform Bill of 1832.

To the mechanical inventions, also, of the eighteenth century the Corn Law question was mainly due. It was only when England had taken her gigantic strides in the direction of manufacturing ascendency, that the pressure of population on subsistence became seriously felt, and the manufacturers gradually assumed the attitude of the champions of free trade. No transformation could have been more astonishing or more complete. Scarcely a form of manufacturing industry had ever been practised in England that had not been fortified by restrictions or subsidised by bounties. The extreme narrowness and selfishness of that manufacturing influence which became dominant at the Revolution had alienated America, had ruined the rising industries of Ireland, had crushed the calico manufactures of India, had imposed on the consumer at home, monopoly prices for almost every article he required. As Adam Smith conclusively shows, the merchants and manufacturers of England had for generations steadily and successfully aimed at two great objects—to secure for themselves by restrictive laws an absolute monopoly of the home market, and to stimulate their foreign trade by bounties paid by the whole community. The language of the great founder of English political economy illustrates with curious vividness how entirely modern is the notion that the manufacturing interest has the smallest natural bias towards free trade. 'Country gentlemen and farmers,' he wrote, 'are, to their great honour, of all people the least subject to the wretched spirit of monopoly. The undertaker of a great manu-

factory is sometimes alarmed if another work of the same kind is established within twenty miles of him. . . . Farmers and country gentlemen, on the contrary, are generally disposed rather to promote than to obstruct the cultivation and improvement of their neighbours' farms and estates. . . . Merchants and manufacturers being collected into towns and accustomed to that exclusive corporation spirit which prevails in them, naturally endeavour to obtain against all their countrymen the same exclusive privileges which they generally possess against the inhabitants of their respective towns. They accordingly seem to have been the original inventors of those restraints upon the importation of foreign goods which secure to them the monopoly of the home market. It was probably in imitation of them, and to put themselves upon a level with those who, they found, were disposed to oppress them, that the country gentlemen and farmers of Great Britain so far forgot the generosity which is natural to their station as to demand the exclusive privilege of supplying their countrymen with corn and butcher's meat. They did not perhaps take time to consider how much less their interest could be affected by the freedom of trade than that of the people whose example they followed.' [1]

Such was the relative attitude of the two classes towards the close of the century. But during the French War a great change took place. On the one hand, the necessity of supplying England with food when almost all Europe was combined against her brought into costly cultivation vast portions of land, both in England and Ireland, which were little adapted for corn culture, and on which it could only subsist under the encouragement of extravagant prices. On the other hand, the growth of the manufacturing towns produced an extreme pressure of population on subsistence, and a great reduction of the corn duties became absolutely inevitable. Under these circumstances the manufacturing leaders strenuously supported the agitation for their total repeal. As great employers of labour it was to them a class interest of the most direct and important character; and, by a singular felicity, while they were certain to obtain an enormous share of the benefits of the change, the whole risk and loss would fall upon others. The movement was easily turned into

[1] *Wealth of Nations*, book iv. chap. ii.

a war of classes; and the great, wealthy, and intelligent class which directed and paid for it, conducted it so skilfully, that multitudes of Englishmen even now look on it as a brilliant exhibition of disinterested patriotism, and applaud the orators who delight in contrasting the enlightened and liberal spirit of English manufacturers with the besotted selfishness of English landlords.

Another effect of the growth of manufactures was to influence very considerably the prevailing opinions about the legitimate sphere of Government interference. 'It is one of the finest problems of legislation,' Burke truly wrote, 'what the State ought to take upon itself and to direct by the public wisdom, and what it ought to leave with as little interference as possible to individual discretion.'[1] It may be added that there are few questions upon which more various and conflicting answers have been given in different ages and countries. In classical antiquity the sphere of government and the sphere of morals were regarded as almost co-extensive. The State undertook to discharge authoritatively moral functions which in modern societies are left chiefly to religions. It set before itself a distinct moral ideal, and it was held to be its supreme end to make wise, virtuous, and capable citizens. It is the task of governors, according to Plato, to 'draw from what Homer calls the divine form and likeness subsisting among men; effacing one thing and putting in another, till they have, as far as possible, made human morals pleasing to the gods.'[2] In that great mediæval and feudal system of law which grew up under the influence of Catholicism, and which after the Reformation still survived in its most essential parts in the laws of the Tudors, the sphere of government was equally extended. Religious belief and religious worship were rigidly prescribed by law and enforced by the severest penalties. Sumptuary laws regulated in minute detail private manners and expenses. Wages and prices were both determined, not by free competition, but by law. Industry in all its departments moved under the restraints and supports of the guilds. Landed property was held, subject to many rigid conditions, and special laws determined how much land must be ploughed, and how much

[1] Burke's *Thoughts on Scarcity*.

[2] *Republic*, vi. c. 13.

might be left in pasture; how much land must surround a labourer's cottage; how many sheep should be supported on a farm. It was, in a word, within the accepted duty of the Government to regulate the social condition of the nation in all its details, with a view to promote the physical and moral well-being of all classes and the strength of the nation as a whole.

This theory of government gradually wore itself away, although the brief period of Puritan ascendency in England, and in the American colonies, exhibited authoritative interference with private manners carried almost to the highest point. Several causes, however, into which it is not now necessary to enter, had produced in England from a very early period a spirit of independence and self-assertion much greater than on the Continent, and the empire of Government over the individual was never so absolute. After the Restoration a new and purely secular theory of government began to dominate, though many fragments of the old feudal laws remained, blending, often very successfully, with more modern legislation. After the Revolution the restriction of the sphere of Government interference proceeded more rapidly. There was a disputed succession, and a Government which did not really represent the sentiments of the majority of the nation, and the Revolution settlement was only kept in existence by a studied moderation, by holding the reins very loosely, by avoiding as much as possible all occasions of friction or collision. At the same time, the most powerful intellectual movements tended to withdraw great departments of human affairs from Government coercion and control. Complete religious toleration and perfect liberty in the expression of political opinion were both substantially achieved. Attempts to regulate manners by sumptuary laws came to an end, though Blackstone notices that when he wrote there was still in the Statute-book an obsolete law of Edward III. ordaining that no one should be served at dinner and supper with more than two courses, except on some great holidays, when he might have three.[1] The regulation of morals, except as far as the well-being of society was directly affected, though not formally abandoned, was no longer seriously undertaken. A law of 1746 punishing profane swearing by fines

[1] Blackstone, bk. iv. ch. xiii.

proportioned to the rank of the culprit,[1] and a few laws against gambling, were the most conspicuous exceptions, though, as we have already seen, the Evangelical movement produced some tendency among private persons to attempt prosecutions under obsolete laws enforcing the strict observance of Sunday, or punishing different kinds of immorality.

In general, however, legislation was now confined to the protection of life and property and the regulation of industry, and the opinion that in the latter sphere most Government interference was mischievous was steadily gaining ground. During the whole of the eighteenth century the famous law of Elizabeth determining the conditions of industry was in force.[2] It provided that no one could lawfully exercise any art, mystery, or manual occupation without having served in it at least seven years as an apprentice; that no one should be bound as an apprentice who was not under twenty-one years, and whose parents did not possess a certain fortune; that every master who had three apprentices must keep one journeyman, and for every other apprentice above three, one other journeyman; that no one should be engaged as a servant or journeyman for less than a year; that the hours of work should be twelve in summer, and from dawn to night in winter, and finally that wages should be assessed for the year by the justices of the peace or town magistrates, who were also directed to settle all disputes between masters and apprentices. Another law which was passed under James I.[3] extended the power of the justices and town magistrates to fix the wages of all kinds of labourers and workmen.

These Acts, however, soon fell into desuetude, and it is remarkable that it was especially the workmen who appear to have clung to them. The Act of Elizabeth was confined to market towns, and to forms of industry which had existed before it was passed. In country villages a person might exercise trades without having served a seven years' apprenticeship, and in recent trades the whole system of regulation was abandoned.[4] The great woollen manufacture, in addition to the Act of Elizabeth, was

[1] Blackstone, bk. iv. ch. iv.
[2] 5 Eliz. c. 4.
[3] 1 James I. c. 6.
[4] *Wealth of Nations*, bk. i. ch. x. part 2. Blackstone, bk. i. ch. xiv.

minutely regulated by earlier statutes, but towards the middle of the eighteenth century there were bitter complaints among the workmen that the justices refused to fix the rate of wages as the law required, and after some strikes and riots an Act was passed in 1756 again ordering the justices to settle yearly the rate of wages in this manufacture.[1] There were other trades which were carried on in corporations under byelaws very imperfectly observed, and there were complaints that some masters had overstocked their trades with multitudes of parish apprentices; that wages were not fixed by law and by the year, but fluctuated and sank with competition. Many petitions were presented by workmen imploring Parliament to regulate them, and several laws for this purpose were passed during the eighteenth century.

As far as can now be judged, the restrictive system, regulating the number of apprentices and settling for long periods the rate of wages, appears to have been popular with the workmen; but the masters in general opposed or evaded the restrictions, and the great developments, changes, and fluctuations of industry towards the close of the century produced new conditions to which the old regulations were inapplicable. There was a period of great industrial anarchy. The custom of assessing wages by the justices of the peace or by the Lord Mayor appears to have become very generally obsolete. In the silk manufacture, however, in consequence of great prevailing distress, three laws called 'The Spitalfields Acts' were passed, providing minutely for the regulation of wages by the Lord Mayor or justices of the peace. Employers giving more or less than the assessed wages to their workmen or evading the Acts, as well as journeymen entering into combinations to raise wages, were condemned to fines, which were to be applied to the relief of needy weavers and their families.[2] In the last years of the century new and very stringent laws were made forbidding combinations of workmen to raise wages.[3] Laws of this kind had already frequently appeared in the Statute-book, and as long as all the conditions of trade were legally regulated they were

[1] 29 George II. c. 33.

[2] 13 George III. c. 68; 32 George III. c. 44; 51 George III. c. 7.

[3] See a full enumeration of these Acts in 5 George IV. c. 95, the law that repealed them.

natural and justifiable. When, however, the law ceased to regulate wages, and the masters were at full liberty to concert to depress them, the combination laws against workmen became a glaring injustice. It is probable that they may be partially explained by the extreme dread of popular associations that might assume a political and Jacobinical form which the French Revolution had produced.[1]

The number of restrictions falling upon industry, and the number of taxes, partly indeed for the purpose of revenue, but partly also for the purpose of regulation, that rested upon its products, were very great. Even before the many taxes that grew out of the war of the American Revolution a foreign observer noticed that an Englishman was taxed when he got up, for his soap; at nine o'clock, for his coffee, tea, and sugar; at noon, for the starch with which he powdered his hair; at dinner, for his salt; in the evening, for his porter; all day long, for his light; and at night, for his candles.[2] A glance over the Statute-book, or at the police reports of the eighteenth century, illustrates curiously the great difference between its industrial system and our own. Thus a law of George I., passed in the interest of the silk manufacturers, prohibited anyone from wearing buttons and button-holes made of cloth or other stuff, and as late as 1796 a law was passed at the request of the makers of metal buttons prescribing the proportion of gilt, double gilt, and triple gilt buttons, and prohibiting the mixture of buttons of different qualities.[3] I have already cited the law which long made it penal for any woman to wear a dress made of Indian calico. In 1766 a lady was fined 200*l.* at the Guild Hall because it was proved that her handkerchief was of French cambric.[4] In the same year an attorney named Brecknock, who had been sent to prison by the House of Lords for publishing a book called the 'Droit du Roi,' avenged himself upon Lord Camden by laying an information before Judge Fielding, that the Chief Justice and three other judges wore cambric bands in court, contrary to the Act of Parliament.[5] The laws against usury were frequently

[1] The details of this struggle will be found in Brentano *On Guilds*, and in Howell's *Conflicts of Labour and Capital*, pp. 81–110. See too some excellent remarks of Mr. Cunningham, *Politics and Economics*.

[2] *Ann. Register*, 1769, p. 86.

[3] Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iii. 118, iv. 373.

[4] *Annual Register*, 1766, p. 53.

[5] See on this curious case the *Bedford Correspondence*, iii. 339.

enforced, and they forbade the exaction of any interest higher than five per cent. All contracts for taking higher interest were not only void, but were punished by the lender forfeiting treble the amount borrowed.[1] The offence of 'owling,' or transporting English wool or sheep to foreign countries, was treated with especial severity, as it was supposed to assist the rival woollen manufactures of the Continent, and the penalties against this offence rose to seven years' transportation. Penalties but little less severe were enacted against those who exported machines employed in the chief English industries, or who induced artificers to emigrate; and any skilled workman who carried his industry to a foreign market, if he did not return within six months, after being warned by the English ambassador, was declared an alien, forfeited all his goods, and became incapable of receiving any legacy or gift. General warrants, without specifying names, were especially employed as a means of detaining such workmen when they were preparing to emigrate, and there were complaints that the condemnation of these warrants during the Wilkes case, by facilitating the emigration, had a prejudicial influence on English industry.[2] At home the law of settlement effectually prevented the labourer from carrying his labour to the most profitable market. The poor law secured him an ultimate support in the parish in which he was settled, but it also gave the parochial authorities an almost unlimited power of preventing a new labourer from establishing himself in the parish and of forcibly removing poor men if they seemed likely to become chargeable on the rates.

This last power, as we have seen, was modified towards the close of the century, and the system of regulation, though still in our eyes extravagantly excessive, had greatly diminished. Though particular Acts still regulated wages in particular trades or places, the old system of determining all wages either by general laws or by particular orders of the justices of the peace in each county, had fallen into complete desuetude. The regula-

Walpole's *George III.* i. 383, 384. Brecknock was afterwards hanged in Ireland as an accessory to the murder for which fighting Fitzgerald was condemned.

[1] Blackstone, book iv. ch. xii. In the *Annual Register* for 1772, p. 116, there is a case of a usurer punished for exacting only 10 p.c. A man in Surrey was fined 1,500*l.* for lending to two young ladies at 20 p.c. *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1773, p. 194.

[2] Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, pp. 508–511.

tion of profits, by fixing the price of provisions and other goods, was now only retained in the case of bread, the assize of which continued till 1815, when it was abolished in London and appears to have become obsolete in other parts of the kingdom.[1] Among the ancient restrictions on free trade in provisions, were a crowd of laws which were still sometimes put in force against 'Badgers,' 'Engrossers,' 'Forestallers,' and 'Regrators,' terms which denoted different classes of speculators, who, foreseeing a coming dearness, and desiring to regulate prices or monopolise the market, bought up large quantities of provisions before they came to market, or at an early period of the market, in order to sell them again at an enhanced price. Most of these laws were repealed in 1772,[2] and Burke appears to have taken the leading part in their abolition.[3] The provisions of the statute of Elizabeth relating to apprentices and journeymen were suffered to fall into general neglect; special Acts were passed in 1777 relieving particular trades from similar restrictions,[4] and under the commercial treaties, which were so frequent during the eighteenth century, some steps were taken in the direction of free trade. The transition of industry from small establishments to vast factories, the wholly new conditions on which its success depended, and the magnitude and power which the different industrial classes assumed, made the regulations of Elizabeth and of the Stuarts altogether impracticable, and they at last led to the great measures of 1814 and 1824, which repealed the Apprentice Act and a number of other old laws, preventing workmen from combining or from emigrating, regulating the rate of wages, the hours of work, and the manner of conducting any business or manufacture. Nearly at the same time the most important of the great exclusive commercial companies were abolished or thrown open.[5]

It is worthy of notice that this vast and rapid emancipation of industry from the restrictions which mediæval and Tudor

[1] See *Wealth of Nations*, book i. ch. x. Wade's *Hist. of the Working and Middle Classes*, p. 101.

[2] 12 Geo. III. c. 71. Blackstone, book iv. ch. xii. Blackstone says, however, that some of these Acts were still offences by common law. According to Sir J. Stephen, forestalling and regrating were still punishable under laws older than Ed. VI. which were only repealed in 1844. *Hist. of the Criminal Law*, iii. 201.

[3] *Parl. Hist.* xxvi. 1169.

[4] Macpherson, iii. 607, 608.

[5] See Cunningham's *Politics and Economics*, pp. 80, 81.

legislation had imposed upon it was effected by a Tory Government, and at a time when Toryism was completely in the ascendant in Parliament. It was partly due to the force of the new circumstances which industrial inventions had produced, and partly also to the general intellectual influences of the time. The first form that political economy assumed was a conviction that all Government interference with industry was an evil. 'Laisser faire, laisser passer,' was the favourite maxim of Quesnay and his school, and, as we have seen, they combined the most unflinching advocacy of commercial freedom with a strong political leaning towards despotism. Fénelon in his 'Telemachus' had already advocated complete liberty of commerce;[1] but what with him was a passing intuition of genius, with the economists was an essential part of a great and well-reasoned system. The English economists adopted the same view, and it was adopted also for other reasons by the more advanced Democrats. The restriction of government within the narrowest limits was in their eyes the condition and indeed the very definition of liberty, and in this respect they were totally opposed to the authoritative democracy of Rousseau and of his later followers. 'All government,' wrote Price, 'even within a State, becomes tyrannical as far as it is a needless and wanton exercise of power, or is carried further than is absolutely necessary to preserve the peace or to secure the safety of the State. This is what an excellent writer calls "governing too much."'[2] 'Government,' wrote Godwin, 'can have no more than two legitimate purposes, the suppression of injustice against individuals within the community, and defence against external invasion.'[3]

Among those who did not belong to the Radical school a great distrust of Government interference with industry was also shown. It appears in the writings of Hume and Tucker, both of whom were decided Tories. 'Our policy,' wrote Arthur Young, 'is weak beyond all doubt, because it consists of prohibiting the natural course of things. All restrictive, forcible measures in domestic policy are bad.'[4] Burke, as we have seen, by no means sympathised with the prevailing Whig doctrine that Government should exercise little or no coercive influence

[1] Livre iii.
[2] Price *On Civil Liberty*, p. 72.
[3] *Political Justice*, ii. 190.
[4] *Political Arithmetic*, p. 95.

in the sphere of religion, but in industrial matters his leaning was consistently on the side of liberty. In that great speech on American taxation which he made in the earlier phase of his career he complained that 'Mr. Grenville thought better of the wisdom and power of human legislation than in truth it deserves. He conceived, and many conceived along with him, that the flourishing trade of this country was greatly owing to law and institution, and not quite so much to liberty,' and, in one of the last tracts he ever wrote, Burke pointed out that the leading vice of the French monarchy had been a 'restless desire of governing too much. The hand of authority was seen in everything and in every place.' 'My opinion,' he concluded, 'is against an overdoing of any sort of administration, and more especially against this most momentous of all meddling on the part of authority, the meddling with the subsistence of the people.'[1]

But by far the most powerful intellectual influence in this direction was that of Adam Smith, whose views on commercial matters soon acquired a paramount authority over the best English minds. It is one of the signal proofs of his genius that, though some of his doctrines have not stood the test of time, his great work in its method and its spirit is more akin to nineteenth century thought than the most eminent of its successors. Unlike Ricardo, and unlike the great school of economists that followed Ricardo, Adam Smith did not treat political economy as a chain of absolute and almost mathematical reasoning, to be evolved *à priori*, and with little or no relation to the fluctuating and diversified conditions of societies. His work is perhaps the best example in literature of the union of history with philosophy, and he showed the true judgment of a statesman in recognising exceptions and limitations to his most cherished principles. Thus, while no previous writer had written so powerfully in favour of the restriction of the sphere of government, he at the same time contended that the education of the people was a task which it was the duty of Government to undertake; that a school should be established in every parish, where children may be taught at so moderate a cost that even a common labourer may afford it; that it should be partly but not

[1] *Thoughts on Scarcity.*

wholly paid by the public, and that the Government may in this way encourage and even impose upon almost the whole body of the people the necessity of acquiring the most essential parts of education. In spite of his strong sense of the value of machinery in industry, he has pointed out with the greatest fullness, and even with some exaggeration, the tendency of the excessive division of labour it produces, to narrow both the intellect and the character. In the same way his central doctrine of free trade is largely qualified. He warmly eulogised the navigation laws on the ground of political expediency, and he justified protective laws in favour of native industry as measures of retaliation against foreign nations which impose restrictions on our imports; as measures of self-preservation, securing to a nation a constant supply of everything that is necessary for the national defence, and as measures of equalisation when the products of foreigners are burdened with lower taxes than our own.

But in spite of these exceptions, his book is essentially one long indictment against Government interference with industry either in the form of restriction or in the form of encouragement. As Dugald Stewart has truly said, it was its main object 'to demonstrate that the most effectual plan for advancing a people to greatness is to maintain that order of things which Nature has pointed out; by allowing every man, as long as he observes the rules of justice, to pursue his own interest in his own way, and to bring both his industry and his capital into the freest competition with those of his fellow-citizens.' Restrictive duties, prohibitions and bounties, by which Legislatures have endeavoured to force industries into particular channels, are alike condemned, as well as all attempts to regulate private expenses by sumptuary laws. The natural effort of each man to improve his own position, when exerted with freedom and security, is represented as the mainspring of national progress. Every nation and individual, in the judgment of Adam Smith, is directly interested in the prosperity of others; their jealousies spring mainly from ignorance; and whatever lowers the cost of the products which a nation requires is equivalent to an increase in the national wealth. The corollary from these propositions is that the largest possible latitude should be given to industry

and competition. The legitimate functions of Government, Smith maintains, may all be summed up under three heads: (1) to protect the society from the attacks of other nations, (2) to secure each member of the society from the injustice or ill-will of other members, (3) to erect and maintain certain establishments of public utility which are of such a nature that it would never be the particular interest of an individual, or the interest of a small number of persons, to construct them.

Such was the order of ideas which for more than a generation presided over and mainly formed the character of English Liberalism. It was a robust, healthy, and self-reliant type, extremely jealous of all extensions of Government interference, extremely tenacious of individual liberty, and habitually preferring spontaneous activity, even when wasteful and ill-regulated, to the disciplined action of a controlling power. Many circumstances, however, have contributed gradually to change it, and it is certain that the problem of the legitimate sphere of Government action is a much more complex and difficult one than it appeared to the writers of the eighteenth century. All political rules are dependent on the special circumstances, conditions, and character of the people for whom they are intended. The political art is essentially an art of adaptation; it admits of very few general terms, and the course which is suited for one stage of society is wholly unsuited for another. There are societies of scattered farmers like the Boers in South Africa for whom scarcely any government is needed. In crowded and highly organised societies the work that must be accomplished by the community is far larger, but there is an enormous difference in different nations in the amount of spontaneous energy which they produce. Let anyone compare from this point of view the great communities of North America with those of South America; or European with Asiatic nations; or Great Britain with Ireland and with most of the nations of the Continent; and he can hardly fail to be struck with the absurdity of supposing that the sphere of Government initiative and control can be defined for all of them by the same rules. Much of this difference has its root in the deep and obscure field of national character, and much also is due to particular circumstances and especially to the distribution of wealth. When there is a large, intelligent,

and energetic middle class; when the spirit of speculation is strongly developed; when there is a high standard of public spirit; and when wealth is so agglomerated that there are many persons who possess either habitually or occasionally incomes much larger than their wants, a crowd of enterprises will be undertaken which are of the highest value to the community, but which only offer to the investor the prospect of doubtful, small, or postponed returns. In countries where these conditions do not exist such works will never be undertaken without the initiative and support of the Government.

In England the great development of manufactures broke the trammels of the mediæval system of industry, and led the way to the triumph of free trade, but it also prepared the way for a new reaction in the direction of Government interference. Adam Smith judged correctly in connecting the question of national education with that of manufactures. The experience of the nineteenth century has abundantly shown that no nation can hold its own in the great competition of the world without a high standard of education, and that such a standard cannot possibly be attained without a large measure of Government direction and assistance. Hence this vast field of activity, which was formerly left to individual initiative or to ecclesiastical organisations, has become one of the chief pre-occupations of statesmen, and over the greater part of Europe immense sums are compulsorily raised in order to establish efficient education under the direct control and superintendence of the State. The Factory Laws marked a second great step in the extension of Government influence—important in itself, but still more important as a precedent. It was found that simple competition occasioned the employment of women and children in a manner that ruined their health; that the overcrowded factory might become a seedplot of immorality; that a permanent lowering of the physical as well as moral standard of a vast section of the population was to be feared, and that great political dangers might grow out of moral evils. Hence sprang a long series of legislative interferences with industry, wholly repugnant to the *laisser faire* philosophy. The progress of medicine, again, showed that some deadly and contagious diseases could be successfully combated by the universal im-

position of certain practices or rules. Hence compulsory vaccination, and the growing sense of the extreme importance of extensive Government measures of sanitary inspection and reform, and experience has conclusively established the enormous saving of human life which can by these means be effected. In a smaller circle the invention of railways had a similar effect, for it was found absolutely necessary to regulate this form of locomotion to a much greater extent than the older forms.

In this manner department after department of human affairs has been gradually drawn to an increased extent into the sphere of Government superintendence and control. But many other and very various influences have been tending in the same direction. The greatly increased sensitiveness of philanthropy which characterises our century, and the immense extension of the newspaper press, have together brought into clear and vivid relief vast numbers of miseries, wants, and possibilities of improvement, which in former years had been unknown or unrealised, and it becomes the natural impulse of multitudes to seek an immediate remedy in Government interference. The impulse is especially natural, and also especially dangerous, because, in the balance of advantages and disadvantages resulting from such a course, the former appeal very powerfully, and the latter most inadequately, to the imagination. Men realise vividly the magnitude of the evil to be combated. They realise vividly the improvement when that evil seems to have suddenly ceased; but they do not realise the impossibility of effecting permanent improvements without changing the characters and desires of men; the danger of weakening by successive acts of interference the spirit of responsibility and self-reliance; the danger of premature and ill-considered reforms producing other evils more grave than those which are remedied; the pressure of the increased taxation, which increased Government superintendence imposes over a wide area of struggling and productive industry; the fatal tendency of every act of interference to become a precedent, and to reproduce itself in further encroachments on individual action. With the great transfer of power to uninstructed democracies the impulse towards Government interference has naturally increased. Plau-

sible and superficial advantages, which are susceptible of a popular treatment, weigh much more on the minds of such men than remote, indirect, and possibly obscure dangers, and, as Aristotle long since pointed out, the demagogue finds his easiest path to power in incitements to class warfare, and promises of class benefits through the compulsory action of Government. It must be added, too, that when once the empire of habit and tradition is broken, and that of popular discussion is extended, the reproductive character of a precedent or a principle is greatly increased. In earlier periods of English history measures of a socialistic tendency, like the English Poor Law, might exist for generations as isolated and perhaps beneficial anomalies. In active democracies the desire to unify and assimilate the type of legislation is much stronger; principles are quickly pushed to their extreme consequences, and one measure of State interference is tolerably sure to become a point of departure, and the basis of many others.

In all these ways the tendency to enlarge the sphere of Government acquires an accelerated force. On the Continent that great augmentation of standing armies which has been so conspicuous a feature of the present century has strengthened the bias in favour of strongly organised and disciplined government; and the laws of equal succession, which have been so generally adopted, are not only themselves a signal instance of legislative interference with the social type, but also, by their tendency to level fortunes, make Government initiative more necessary. In England the notion has greatly extended of regarding Government as a machine for securing co-operative effort, for unifying, organising, and concentrating the action of the community for many different purposes, and the large number of public men who have been formed and influenced by the experience of Indian life has had a similar effect.

Under all these influences, the tendency which prevailed in the latter half of the eighteenth century has been not only checked but reversed. The old jealousy of Government interference, and of encroachments on individual liberty, and the old disposition to rely on individual action rather than Government assistance, have both manifestly diminished, and the pendulum of opinion sways once more in the direction of

authority. Compulsory regulations have, within the last twenty or thirty years, multiplied to a startling degree in the Statute-book. The immense increase of the burden of taxation is largely due to the many additional functions which Government has assumed. The modern system of placing the credit of the State, in the form of large loans at low interest, at the service of particular classes, seems likely to have a very wide extension, and much of the Irish legislation of the last few years has been as irreconcilable with the principles of Adam Smith, with modern notions of private property, and with the respect for contracts, as any part of the legislation of the Tudors.

I do not here undertake to judge these measures. What I have written is intended merely to point out the change of tendency, since the closing years of the eighteenth century. There was then much less desire for Government interference and compulsion. There was also much less sensitiveness to the great evils of the time. Of this latter fact the almost unchanged condition of the penal code is a sufficient proof.

I have devoted several pages, in a former volume, to the penal system of the eighteenth century, and the barbarities and absurdities which were there described were not seriously diminished before its close. The fact will appear supremely shameful when we remember that the reform of penal codes had on the Continent been one of the special themes of writers upon politics, and one of the capital achievements of the great generation of reforming monarchs and statesmen that preceded the French Revolution. The atrocity and almost grotesque absurdity of the English penal code grew out of certain inveterate traditions of English legislation. Penal laws, enacted often in a remote antiquity and under circumstances that have wholly vanished, have been constantly allowed to remain unrepealed, though they have become obsolete and nearly forgotten, and later generations, without revoking them, have made new laws against the same crimes. Nothing is more common than to find, in consequence, that the same crimes may be prosecuted under totally different penalties. At last a generation arises who consider acts that had once been deemed heinously criminal either innocent or venial, and a law is passed repealing a great

mass of ancient legislation that condemned them. The historian will naturally assume that they had become legal; but he will constantly find, on more careful examination, that an act which had been formally freed from a crowd of penalties, still remains an offence by common law, or by some ancient statute which had not been included in the list of those which were repealed; and occasionally, and at long intervals, penal laws which had been regarded as wholly obsolete were put in force. This utter want of method and symmetry in English legislation, this extravagant multiplication of statutes bearing upon the same act, this difference between the theory and the practice of the law, constitutes one of the chief difficulties of an English historian, and we have had many examples of it in the present work. Another class of laws had acquired a great additional severity by the lapse of time. Legislators had endeavoured to protect property by punishing with death those who stole a sum of money which in their time was considerable, and the penalty was retained when the change in the value of money had made that sum insignificant. In this way, as an old lawyer forcibly complained, 'While everything else had risen in its nominal value and become dearer, the life of man had continually grown cheaper.' It was also the constant practice of Parliament in the eighteenth century, when new offences arose or when old offences assumed a new prominence, to pass special Acts making them capital. Hence an enormous and undigested multiplication of capital offences, which soon made the criminal code a mere sanguinary chaos. Previous to the Revolution the number in the Statute-book is said not to have exceeded fifty. During the reign of George II. sixty-three new ones were added. In 1770 the number was estimated in Parliament at one hundred and fifty-four,[1] but by Blackstone at one hundred and sixty; and Romilly, in a pamphlet which he wrote in 1786, observed that in the sixteen years since the appearance of Blackstone's Commentaries it had considerably increased.

A few illustrations will sufficiently show the extravagant absurdity of the code. Thus, to steal a sheep or a horse; to snatch a man's property out of his hands and run away with it; to steal to the amount of forty shillings in a dwelling-house, or

[1] *Cavendish Debates*, ii. 12.

to the amount of five shillings 'privately' in a shop; to pick a man's pocket of any greater sum than twelve pence; to steal linen from a bleaching ground, and woollen cloth from a tenter ground; to cut down trees in a garden or in an orchard; to break the border of a fishpond so that the fish may escape, were all crimes punishable with death. On the other hand, it was not a capital offence for a man to attempt the life of his father; to commit premeditated perjury, even when the result was the execution of an innocent man; to stab a man, however severely, provided the victim did not die from the wound; to burn a house in which the incendiary had a lease, even though it was so situated as to endanger the lives of hundreds. It was a capital offence to steal goods to the amount of forty shillings from a vessel on a navigable river, but not from a vessel on a canal. To steal fruit ready gathered was a felony. To gather it and steal it was only a trespass. To break a pane of glass at five in the afternoon for the purpose of stealing something that lay in the window was a capital offence. To break open a house with every circumstance of violence in summer, at four o'clock in the morning, was only a misdemeanour. To steal goods from a shop, if the thief happened to be seen to take them, was punishable by transportation. To steal the same goods 'privately,' that is to say when the criminal was not seen, was punishable with death. In one case a servant was put on his trial who had attempted to murder his master, and had given him fifteen wounds with a hatchet. He was executed, not as an attempted murderer, but as a burglar, because he had been obliged to lift up the latch of his master's door in order to enter his chamber. In another case a man of notoriously bad character, after going through a course of burglary and larceny with impunity, was at last convicted and executed for cutting down young trees.[1]

[1] I have taken these illustrations chiefly from a valuable tract of Romilly, called *Observations on a late publication entitled 'Thoughts on Executive Justice'* (London, 1786). The work commented on was by Madan, a well-known leader in the Evangelical movement. See, too, a speech of Mackintosh, *Parl. Debates*, New Series, i. 232. Lord Russell *On the Constitution*, ch. xxiv. *A Treatise on the Police, by a Magistrate for the Counties of Middlesex, Surrey, Kent, and Essex* (Colquhoun), pp. 284–286. Disparities of punishment almost equally great may be found in cases which were not capital. Thus (to give but a single example) two persons were whipped round Covent Garden in 1772, pursuant of sentence, the one for stealing a bunch of radishes, the other for debauching and polluting his own niece. (*Annual Register*, 1772, p. 116.)

The only difference in punishment by which the law of England distinguished the most atrocious murder from the theft of five shillings, was that in the first case, under a law of George II., the execution of the criminal was to take place within forty-eight hours of his conviction, and his body was to be anatomised.

A natural result of such laws was the constant perjury of juries. Unwilling to convict culprits for small offences which were made punishable by death, they frequently acquitted in the face of the clearest evidence; and, as witnesses in these cases were also very reluctant to appear, criminals—among whom the gambling spirit is strongly developed—generally preferred to be tried for a capital offence rather than for misdemeanour. Often, too, juries, when unwilling to acquit, reduced the offence by the most barefaced perjury to the rank of a misdemeanour. Thus, several cases are recorded, in which prisoners, indicted for stealing from dwelling-houses, were convicted only of larceny, by the jury finding that the value of what they had stolen was less than forty shillings, even when several guineas in gold, or bank notes to a considerable amount, were among the booty that was taken.[1] The proportion of arrested men who were either discharged on account of prosecutors and witnesses failing to appear against them, or acquitted on account of the reluctance of juries to condemn, or of the legal rule that the smallest technical flaw invalidated an indictment, was enormously great. Thus, in the four years before 1795 no less than 5,592 persons who had been committed for trial were discharged by proclamation and gaol deliveries, and 2,962 others were acquitted.[2] In one year from April 1793 to March 1794, 1,060 persons were tried at the Old Bailey, and of these only 493 were punished.[3]

The executions, though scandalously numerous, bore but a

[1] See some curious cases of this kind cited in Romilly's *Observations on the Criminal Law of England* (1810), pp. 65–67; Grose's *Olio*, pp. 259, 261; and Lord Russell *On the Constitution*.

[2] *Colquhoun on the Police of the Metropolis* (3rd ed.), pp. 90, 91. See, too, on the proportion of discharges to offenders, pp. 225–231. This writer, who was an active London magistrate, states that, owing to the conscientious scruples of multitudes, to prosecute delinquents for inconsiderable thefts which were liable to capital punishment, 'it is believed that not one depredation in a hundred of those actually committed, comes to the knowledge of magistrates' (p. 260).

[3] Ibid. pp. 292–294.

small proportion to the convictions, but the statistics that are preserved on the subject are too fragmentary for a complete statement. Sir Stephen Janssen, who was Chamberlain for London, preserved a full list of the capital convictions at the Old Bailey during the twenty-three years from 1749 to 1772. The number of persons condemned to death in those years was 1,121. The number of executions was 678. In the Norfolk and Midland circuits between 1750 and 1772, 952 persons were sentenced to death, but the proportion of executions was much smaller than in London, for only 233 persons were executed. Four hundred and sixty-seven persons were executed in London and Middlesex alone in the twelve years from December 1771 to December 1783.[1] In 1785 not less than 96 persons were hanged at the Old Bailey.[2] In Scotland capital punishments seem to have been much more sparingly administered. Between January 1768 and May 1782, only 76 persons were condemned and 54 executed.[3] In the Dutch Republic, where the standard of order and good government was at least as high as in any part of Europe, Howard found an instructive contrast to the English system. In all the seven provinces together there were seldom more executions in a year than from four to six. In the great city of Amsterdam, which was about a third of the size of London, and contained 250,000 inhabitants, he found that in the eight years before his arrival only five persons had been executed.[4]

There is nothing more scandalous in the history of England in the eighteenth century than the neglect by legislators and statesmen of these abuses. Burke was indeed in this, as in many other respects, an exception to the spirit of his time. He strongly urged the necessity of revising the penal code. He described it, certainly without exaggeration, as 'radically defective' and 'abominable,' and he seems to have made it his practice to oppose steadily the multiplication of capital offences.[5] But in general English statesmen paid no attention to such matters, and when the great task of softening the penal code was undertaken in the early years of the nineteenth century,

[1] *Howard on Prisons*, pp. 479–485.
[2] *Annual Register*, 1785, p. 247.
[3] Howard, p. 485.
[4] Howard, pp. 45, 56.
[5] See *Parl. Hist.* xxviii. 146.

the leading lawyers bitterly opposed it. In Parliament the enactment of new capital offences appears to have been left almost exclusively to a few lawyers. There were no debates which excited less interest, which were less attended or worse reported. Burke used to relate that being stopped one night when leaving the House of Commons, and requested by the Clerk at the table to stay to make a house, he asked what was the business in question, and was answered, 'Oh, sir, it is only a new capital felony!'[1] Outside Parliament, Paley, in a well-known passage of his 'Moral Philosophy,' justified the English system on the ground that it swept into the net every crime which under any possible circumstances could deserve death, leaving it to the executive to single out for condign punishment such cases as presented particular features of danger or aggravation.

But although in the latter years of the century only a very small proportion of capital sentences for the lighter offences were carried into effect, the English penal code in its actual enforcement was probably the most sanguinary in Europe, while it was totally wanting in that element of certainty, which, as Beccaria truly said, is the most essential in a penal code. The profuse distribution of the penalty of death not only multiplied enormously chances of acquittal, but also deprived secondary punishments for capital offences of most of their deterrent power, for the imaginations of men were naturally much more impressed by the escape of a criminal from the gallows than by the fate which subsequently awaited him. In London and Middlesex, criminals after sentence were all remitted to the gaol, where they remained in suspense about their fate till the Recorder had made his report to the King in Council, when, perhaps, a third part were removed for execution. In the other parts of England the judges directly, and of their own authority, reprieved the criminals, and their sentences were then invariably commuted.[2] Different judges, as might be expected, differed

[1] Lord Russell *On the Constitution*, ch. xxiv. Romilly's *Observations on a late Publication entitled 'Thoughts on Executive Justice,'* p. 45.

[2] *Thoughts on Executive Justice* (Madan), pp. 98–101. Colquhoun, in 1785, said: 'According to the present system, out of about 100 who are upon an average every year doomed to suffer the punishment of death, four-fifths or more are generally pardoned, either on condition of being transported, or of going into his Majesty's service, and not seldom without any

considerably in their severity, and much depended on the general character of the criminal, and even on his demeanour in the dock. One writer, near the close of the century, mentions that he was present when a girl of twenty-two was hanged for receiving a piece of check from an accomplice who had stolen it. Such crimes were at this time scarcely ever capitally punished, but the poor girl had unfortunately drunk too freely before the trial, and was insolent in the dock. The prosecutor, a simple, honest man, who had no idea that such a punishment would be inflicted, was driven almost distracted by remorse, and did not long survive the shock.

The improvements in the penal system during the last half of the century were few and slight. I have already mentioned the repeal of the laws condemning prisoners who refused to plead to be pressed to death, and all gipsies to be hanged, and the substitution in 1790 of the gallows for the stake, in the capital punishment of women. I have noticed also the disgusting scene of ribaldry and profanity which habitually took place when the criminal was carried, for more than two miles, through the most crowded thoroughfares in London, from Newgate to Tyburn. So brutal and brutalising a spectacle could be seen in no other capital in Europe, nor could any be conceived more fitted to harden a dying criminal, to make him, if reckless and unrepentant, the hero of the mob, and to deprive his execution of every element of solemnity. It is a curious illustration of the caprice of national sentiment, that English opinion in the eighteenth century allowed the execution of criminals to be treated as a popular amusement, but at the same time revolted against the Continental custom of compelling chained prisoners to work in public, as utterly inconsistent with English liberty. The scandal of English executions was not wholly removed till our own day, but it was one of the few good measures of the Coalition Ministry of 1783 that it abolished the procession to Tyburn, and criminals were from that date executed in front of the gaol.[1] A serious improvement was at the same time made

condition at all' (*Police of the Metropolis*, p. 294). From August 1792 to June 1794, 1,002 pardons, absolute or conditional, were granted (p. 296).

[1] Johnson expressed his great indignation at this change, declaring that the age 'was running mad after innovation,' and that even Tyburn was not safe from it. See Boswell's *Johnson* (Croker's ed.), p. 720.

in the manner of execution by the introduction of the drop. Previous to this time the punishment by hanging was a very unequal one, and the death in some cases very lingering. The French traveller Misson mentions the horrible fact that the relations and friends of a criminal often themselves laid hold on his legs when he was hanging, in order to put him out of his agony. The drop is said to have been first used at the execution of Lord Ferrers in 1760, but it does not appear to have come into general use till 1783, when the London executions were removed from Tyburn to Newgate.[1]

The senseless and savage rule which deprived prisoners accused of any capital offence, except treason, of the assistance of counsel, unless some question of law arose which it was necessary to discuss, had been slightly relaxed. Even Blackstone, who regarded the criminal law of his country with the characteristic complacency of an English lawyer, acknowledged that there was no plausible reason why the same assistance should not be granted to a poor, ignorant, and terror-stricken prisoner, in cases affecting his life, as in cases of petty trespass; and he ventured timidly to hint that this 'seems to be not all of a piece with the rest of the humane treatment of prisoners by the English law.'[2] By the permission of the judges, however, in trials for felony a counsel now usually stood beside the prisoner, instructed him what questions to ask, and even himself cross-examined the witnesses, though he might not address the judge or jury unless a legal question had arisen.[3]

It appears still to have been the rule that criminal trials should be compressed into a single day. Whether this haste was due to a consideration for the juries, or to the professional interest of the lawyers, may be a matter of dispute. In the more lucrative branches of the profession no such hurry was shown. Civil suits, and especially suits in Chancery, were often protracted for years, and sometimes even for generations, by merciless legal subtleties, and in this way countless fortunes were engulfed, and countless hearts were broken. But in those

[1] See an interesting letter on the history of the drop in the Croker Correspondence, iii. 15, 16. *Annual Register*, 1760, p. 45.

[2] See the whole of the curious passage, book iv. ch. xxvii.

[3] Ibid. Compare Sir J. Stephen's *History of the Criminal Law*, i. 424.

less lucrative cases in which only a human life was pending, evidence was often hurried through with indecent haste, or sittings were so prolonged that neither judges nor jurymen can have been fit to discharge their duty. The impartiality and the dignity of English judges have been rarely questioned since the Revolution, but an English criminal trial was probably far from being as decorous a thing in the eighteenth century as in our own day. A writer in 1785, whose leanings were all on the side of severity towards criminals, has left us the following picture: 'A cause of much evil,' he says, 'is the trying prisoners after dinner, when from the morning's adjournment all parties have retired to a hearty meal, which at assize time is commonly attended, among the middling and lower ranks of people at least, with a good deal of drink. . . . Drunkenness is too frequently apparent where it ought of all things to be avoided. I mean in jurymen and witnesses. The heat of the court, joined to the fumes of the liquor, has laid many an honest juryman into a calm and profound sleep, and sometimes it has been no small trouble for his fellows to jog him into the verdict, even where a wretch's life has depended on the event. This I myself have seen—as also witnesses by no means in a proper situation to give their evidence.'[1]

The American War put an end to the old system of disposing of criminals by selling them for the term of their sentence to American planters. This system began in 1718, continued for fifty-six years, and appears to have been remarkably successful. Healthy agricultural labour, pursued during many years under rigid discipline and amid totally new associations, proved a great school of reformation, and many convicts, after their term had expired, became farmers and planters on their own account, and rose to respectability, and sometimes to wealth. Skilful thieves, who formed a large proportion of them, had generally good natural abilities, and their labour proved so useful in Maryland, where they were chiefly sent, that, for some years before the beginning of the American War, contracts were made to convey them without any expense to Government, which had

[1] *Thoughts on Executive Justice*, pp. 144, 145. The reader will remember Pope's line, 'And wretches hang that jurymen may dine.' See, too, Sir J. Stephen's *History of Criminal Law*, i. 422.

formerly allowed 5*l.* a head. For some time after the outbreak of the war, there was great difficulty in disposing of convicts. The gaols were soon overcrowded. A project was formed for transporting convicts to an island in the Gambia, but it was soon abandoned, and in 1776 an Act was passed for establishing convict galleys. In the space of nineteen years, about eight thousand convicts were divided between an old ship named the 'Justicia,' which was moored at Woolwich, and two others in Langston and Portsmouth Harbours.[1] Howard says that out of 632 prisoners on board the 'Justicia,' 116 died within nineteen months.[2] The discoveries of Captain Cook, and the glowing description which his companion Sir Joseph Banks gave of New South Wales, made the English Ministers, after a time, resolve to revive the system of transportation, and to make New South Wales the receptacle of their criminals. An Act was passed in 1784 authorising transportation, in the old method, assigning the convicts as servants to the contractor who undertook it. In 1786 and 1787, however, a new system was adopted, and a great penal settlement was established at Botany Bay, under the governorship of Captain Phillip. At a much later period, the Australian colonies naturally and properly resented the introduction into their population of English criminals. But at the time when the settlement was founded, Australia was almost a desert country. Its splendid future was as yet unrealised; convict labour was of no small use in opening its resources; and there is no reason to believe that either in Australia or America the criminal element in the early population has left behind it any permanent moral trace.[3]

There were great abuses in the early convict system in Australia, and especially in the treatment of the female convicts; but on the whole, transportation to this distant and unknown country was probably a more deterrent punishment than imprisonment at home, and the fate of transported convicts was in most respects superior. The English gaols, in spite of the strong light which had been thrown on their condition by the Parlia-

[1] Walpole's *Last Journals*, ii. 38. Adolphus, iv. 231. *The Police of the Metropolis*, pp. 299–309.

[2] Howard *On Prisons*, p. 465.

[3] Many particulars about the early convict life in Australia will be found in the singularly interesting little book of Mr. Bonwick, *First Twenty Years of Australia*.

mentary inquiry of 1729, continued in a state which shows forcibly the extreme corruption that might still exist in departments of English administration, to which public opinion was not turned. The latter half of the century, however, witnessed the labours of John Howard, the greatest of prison reformers, and his untiring efforts, seconded by the Legislature and supported by that great wave of philanthropic enthusiasm which proceeded from the Evangelical movement, gradually effected a complete renovation.

The attention of Howard was first called to the condition of prisoners, in 1756, when on a voyage to Lisbon he was captured by a French privateer and imprisoned at Brest and at Morlaix; but his active mission dates from 1773, when he was appointed High Sheriff of Bedfordshire, and was in that capacity charged with the superintendence of the county gaols. From this time till his death at Cherson in January 1790, his whole life was devoted to a single object, and the researches he made into the condition of prisons in every part of the United Kingdom as well as in all the principal countries on the Continent, revealed to the world a mass of maladministration and atrocious cruelty which made a deep and lasting impression.

The abuses he discovered were of many kinds. The food in nearly all English prisons was utterly insufficient. The pennyworth or at most two pennyworths of bread, daily allowed each prisoner had been originally fixed at a time when corn was nearly twice as cheap as when Howard wrote, and being very frequently farmed out by the gaolers the amount was constantly diminished. In nearly half the county gaols the debtors, and in several bridewells all prisoners, were left without any regular allowance of food and subsisted on charity. There were often no sewers, no infirmaries, no means of warming the prisons during the winter. In one gaol Howard found but three pints of water a day allowed to each prisoner for both drinking and washing. Prisoners were crowded to excess, for fourteen or fifteen hours of the day, in dark, damp, subterranean dungeons reeking with pestilential effluvia. In many gaols and most bridewells there was no allowance for bedding, or for straw for prisoners to sleep on, and if by any means they procured any, it was not changed for months. Almost all ventilation was stopped in order to escape the window tax. The

vileness of the air was such, that Howard declared that after visiting the prisons his clothes were so impregnated that he could not bear to drive in a post-chaise with closed windows, but was obliged to travel on horseback, and even the leaves of his memorandum book were so tainted that he was often unable to use it till he had spread it for an hour or two before the fire. In such an atmosphere, in such a scene of putrescence and filth, human life rapidly withered. Scorbutic diseases multiplied fiercely; mortification in the feet was so deadly that some great contractors for transporting criminals to the colonies complained that the mortality from this source alone almost destroyed their profits; discharged prisoners proved the centres of contagion wherever they went, and the gaol fever raged with such a deadly virulence that Howard computed that every year it carried away far more than perished by the gallows.

There were other evils of a different kind. Many gaols were private property, and the gaolers were in these almost wholly withdrawn from the attention of the magistrates. Many gaolers and turnkeys had no salaries and lived on the fees extorted from the prisoners, and on the profits of the prison tap, which was usually in the gaoler's hands. Some kept public-houses and supplied the richer prisoners with drink. Before the Act of 1774 it was a common thing for acquitted prisoners to be imprisoned for months on account of fees they were unable to pay, and even after that Act there were constant cases of extortion. Many country prisons were in an almost ruinous condition. A gaol at Ely was so dilapidated that for some time it was the custom to secure the prisoners by chaining them on their backs on the floor, with an iron collar and spikes about their necks, and a heavy iron bar over their legs. This case was one of unusual atrocity; but in most country prisons, heavy chains and iron collars were in constant use, though the gaoler was often ready to remove or lighten them for money. In many prisons there were no courtyards, or the courtyards were appropriated by the gaolers, or they were so ruinous and insecure that the prisoners were not allowed to enter them. Much of the support of the prisoners was derived from mendicancy. Gaunt, skinny arms might be seen stretched through the iron bars to receive alms from the passers-by. At Salisbury, Howard found

two debtors, daily chained by a staple fixed outside the prison door in order that they might sell nets, purses, and laces made in the prison; and at Christmas felons chained together were permitted to go begging through the City.

In many prisons there was scarcely a semblance of discipline. Lunatics were often confined in them. Friends of prisoners were freely admitted and allowed to use the prison like a public-house. For those who could pay, drinking and gambling went on with little restraint, and there were frequent instances of gross immorality. When a new prisoner was brought into the Bridewell he was immediately seized by the other prisoners, who called for 'garnish' or drink money, and if he was unable to pay he was at once stripped of a great part of his clothes. In most prisons debtors and felons, men and women, young boys or girls fresh to the paths of crime, and confined for the most trifling offences, and the oldest and most hardened criminals habitually mixed together during the whole day, so that the prison became the most deadly and most certain school of vice, and innumerable crimes were planned within its walls. Untried and perhaps innocent men were often exposed for months to its contagion. In some counties the gaol delivery was but once a year. At Hull it was but once in three years. Every year hundreds of persons who had entered the prison-door, either innocent or mere novices in crime, came out of it accomplished criminals, completely and hopelessly depraved, and at the same time shut out from almost all honest means of subsistence.[1]

These few lines may be sufficient to give a general outline of the abuses of English prisons in the early years of George III., but the reader who would form an adequate conception of their magnitude must himself turn to that ghastly procession of detailed evidence, collected from every gaol in the kingdom, which is to be found in the treatise of Howard. A long and searching investigation into the condition of prisons on the Continent completed his task, and it had an importance which is not limited to its immediate subject. Probably the most fruitful as well as the safest method of political and social reform is to be found in a careful comparison of the laws,

[1] Howard's *State of Prisons*.

institutions, and administrative measures by which different nations have endeavoured to solve the same problems, to cure or to diminish the same evils. Of this comparative method the writings of Howard form one of the earliest and best examples. They illustrate vividly one side of the moral history of Europe, and they at the same time furnish painful proofs of the fragmentary and unequal character of European civilisation. There were no doubt prisons in Germany and Italy, in the bishopric of Liége and in Russia, which were even more horrible than any in England. Though torture had been in general abolished or disused throughout Europe, Howard still found it regularly employed at Osnabrück, Hanover, Munich, Hamburg and Liége, and in Austrian Flanders, and he found recent traces of it in some other quarters. Death by breaking on the wheel was not unusual. An executioner in Russia acknowledged to him that slow death by the knout was often in that country deliberately inflicted. But on the whole, England, which stood so high among the nations of the world in political, industrial, and intellectual eminence, ranked in most matters relating to the treatment of criminals shamefully below the average of the Continent. Nowhere else were the executions so numerous. Nowhere else were they conducted with such revolting indecency, and in scarcely any other country were the abuses in prisons so gross, so general, and so demoralising.

Prison reform had already attracted some attention on the Continent. It had formed part of the great series of reforms which had been carried out by Leopold in Tuscany. In Austrian Flanders, Houses of Correction had lately been erected which filled Howard with admiration, and Count Vilain XIV. had done much to anticipate his work. Imprisonment for debt had been abolished in Portugal in 1774, and in many other countries it was carefully limited and regulated. In the Dutch Republic, institutions, both for the correction and reformation of prisoners, had been brought to almost the highest perfection; nearly every important prison reform of the nineteenth century appears to have been anticipated, and Howard found in the Dutch prisons and Rasphouses not only a model of all he desired, but also a conclusive proof of the efficacy of such methods in diminishing crime. In Switzerland a physician,

much concerned in prison management, assured him that the gaol fever which was so inveterate in English gaols was absolutely unknown, and he added that he believed it to exist nowhere but in England. Howard acknowledged that he found no trace of it on the Continent, not even in Russia and Italy, where there were some of the worst prisons in Europe. There had been, it is true, a terrible outbreak of scurvy in the Paris prisons, but improved regulations had completely checked it, and although prisons in the French provinces were very bad, those in Paris were now admirably managed.

The special evils of English prisons were evils of administration, largely due to the position of the gaolers. There was an old law of Charles II. ordering the separation of debtors from felons.[1] An Act of George II. had forbidden under stringent penalties the introduction of spirituous liquor into workhouses or gaols, and another Act, which was called the 'Lords' Act' because it originated in the House of Lords, and which became the basis of much subsequent legislation, among many other provisions obliged the creditors of imprisoned debtors to provide four pence a day for their support.[2] These Acts, however, were systematically violated. In 1773, the year in which Howard began his mission, a member of Parliament named Popham brought forward the abuses relating to gaolers' fees, and tried unsuccessfully to carry a Bill throwing them on the county rates, and in the same year a beneficent Act was passed appointing for the first time regular chaplains for the county gaols of England.[3] In the following year Howard gave evidence, before a parliamentary committee, about the condition of some fifty prisons which he had visited, and received the thanks of the House, and in that year two very important Acts were passed. One of them provided in much detail for the cleanliness and ventilation of prisons, and the other condemned the frequent practice of detaining in prison, on account of fees due to sheriffs, gaolers, and keepers of prisons, men against whom no indictment had been brought, or who had been acquitted, and enacted that in such cases fees should no longer be demanded, but that an equivalent sum should be paid out of the county rates.[4]

[1] 23 Charles II. c. 20.
[2] 24 Geo. II. c. 40. 32 Geo. II. c. 28.
[3] 13 Geo. III. c. 58.
[4] 14 Geo. III. c. 20, 59.

Howard at his own expense sent printed copies of these Acts to every keeper of a county prison in England. Some other measures of slight importance were afterwards taken regulating fees and improving the condition of insolvent debtors; and Grey supported by Burke made an effort in 1794 to abolish imprisonment for debt.

The treatment of debtors in England was indeed one of the most astonishing instances of the astonishing corruption of English law. 'If a debt exceeds 40*s*.,' wrote a most competent authority in 1795, 'the action may be brought in a superior court, where if contested or defended the expense at the lowest computation must be upwards of 50*l*. . . . at present the rule is to allow the same costs for 40*s*. as for 10,000*l*. It depends only on the length of the pleading, and not on the value of the action.' 'In the county of Middlesex alone,' says the same writer, 'in the year 1793, the number of bailable writs and executions for debts from 10*l*. to 20*l*. amounted to no less than 5,719, and the aggregate amount of the debts sued for was 81,791*l*. It will scarcely be credited, although it is most unquestionably true, that the mere costs of these actions although made up, and not defended at all, would amount to 68,728*l*.—and if defended, the aggregate expense to recover 81,791*l*. must be (strange and incredible as it may appear) no less than 285,950*l*., being considerably more than three times the amount of the debts sued for.' More than one million of money, in debts of 100*l*. and upwards, was recovered at considerably less than half the expense of 81,791*l*. in debts of from 10*l*. to 20*l*. It is a horrible fact that between six thousand and seven thousand persons were arrested every year on mesne process in Middlesex alone, one-half of whom were for debts under 20*l*. In the kingdom at large the number annually arrested for trifling debts was estimated at not less than forty thousand.[1] It was such men who were exposed during long periods of imprisonment to the intolerable evils of English gaols, and their long imprisonment was usually due much less to their original debts than to the legal expenses that had been heaped upon them. Can it be deemed surprising that many foreigners who

[1] Colquhoun, *Police of the Metropolis*, pp. 390–393.

valued good administration, public order, and cheap justice more than representative institutions and political liberty, should have preferred their own system to that of England?

Howard, though he was deeply imbued with the very emotional Evangelical piety which was then rising to prominence, was far from being a sentimental reformer. He dwelt strongly on the evils of public executions, and desired capital punishments to be restricted to three or four offences, but he was no advocate for a complete abolition of the punishment of death, and while pointing out the enormous abuses in English gaols, he did not forget—as his successors have sometimes done—that the diet and treatment of prisoners should always be such as to make imprisonment a deterrent punishment to the most needy, and that hard labour is an essential element in every sound prison system. The task which he and his generation of reformers set before them was chiefly to remedy great positive abuses, but the success with which the reformation of criminals was pursued in Holland gave rise to an Act for the erection of penitentiaries in England,[1] which was carried in 1779, chiefly by the influence of Blackstone. There was, however, much delay in carrying it out, although Pitt clearly saw and stated the importance of discriminating between the different kinds and degrees of criminal character, and averting the contagion of vice produced by the existing prison system.[2] It was not until some years after the death of Howard, that English philanthropy made the reclamation of criminals one of its great objects. In the last years of the eighteenth century, if this end was ever attained, it was probably in most cases through the army and navy. Every year of war many convicts were pardoned on condition of enlisting, and the press gang and the recruiting sergeant brought great numbers of discharged criminals under the stringent and healthy regimen of naval or military discipline.

All attempts to estimate the amount and the fluctuation of crime in the eighteenth century must be extremely vague and unsatisfactory. Accurate statistics on these matters date only from the nineteenth century, and the scandalous imperfection of

[1] 19 Geo. III. c. 74.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xxviii. 1224.

the police system, and the extravagant severity of the criminal code, secured the escape of a great proportion of criminals. In the first half of the present century, concerning which we have full information, the proportion of convictions to acquittals largely augmented, and the increase in the number of committals was far greater than can be accounted for by the increase of population.[1] Much, however, of this apparent deterioration may no doubt be ascribed to the greater efficiency of the police force, and to a somewhat mitigated and simplified criminal code. On the whole it appears probable that, in the eighteenth century, crimes against the person, and especially murder, diminished, but that large classes of crimes against property increased. I have already collected evidence showing the terrible and long-continued outbreak of crime in London from 1767 to 1771;[2] and the distress which was then very widely prevalent, spread similar disorders over the country.[3] Prosecutions under the Game Laws are said to have much multiplied with the growth of enclosures. By the law of England, no one at this time, with a few strictly specified exceptions, was permitted to shoot or fish even on his own grounds, unless he possessed a freehold estate of at least 100*l.* a year, or a leasehold of at least 150*l.*; the sale of game was absolutely prohibited, and although the penalties of poaching were not so severe as they became under George IV., it was still possible for young men to be publicly whipped for having killed a hare.[4]

Many other forms of crime were naturally increased in the closing years of the century by the great rise in the price of food, and by the great changes and fluctuations of industry. The full and detailed account which Colquhoun has given of the state of crime in London about 1795 shows that large classes of offences against property had attained a terrible magnitude. This able and experienced magistrate speaks of it as an incontestable fact that there was much more crime in proportion to population, and especially much more crime against property, in England than in France, Flanders, Holland, and some other

[1] Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, pp. 615, 653.

[2] Vol. iii. pp. 131–138. See, too, *Parl. Hist.* xvi. 929–942.

[3] See much evidence of this in Phillimore, *Hist. of Geo. III.* pp. 410, 411.

[4] See an instance of this at Reading, *Gent.'s Magazine*, 1773, p. 98.

Northern countries,[1] and he ascribes it very largely to the immense proportion of criminals who were either not arrested, or were acquitted though guilty, or were returned to the population, after a short period of imprisonment, totally corrupted and with an almost absolute impossibility of finding any honest means of livelihood. In seven years before a reform in the police establishment, which took place in 1792, no less than 4,262 prisoners, who had been put on their trial at the Old Bailey by the grand juries, were acquitted. Between April 1793 and March 1794 inclusive, 1,060 persons were committed for trial at the Old Bailey, and of these 567 were acquitted and discharged. 'The acquittals,' adds Colquhoun, 'will generally be found to attach mostly to small offences which are punishable with death. Where juries do not consider the crime deserving so severe a punishment, the delinquent receives no punishment at all.'[2]

Colquhoun gives at the same time a very vivid picture of the extreme inefficiency of the watchmen and of the whole police administration. The crimes which he describes as having of late years especially increased were coining, petty forgery, robberies from ships on the Thames, and other offences against property. He states that there were believed to be more than three thousand receivers of stolen goods in London, and an equal proportion all over the country.[3] Public-houses were, next to the prisons, the great schools of crime, and there were no less than 5,204 licensed within the bills of mortality. The complaints of excessive drunkenness do not appear to have been as great as in the earlier half of the century, but Colquhoun has made one remark about public-houses which appears to me of much significance. 'The period,' he says, 'is not too remote to be recollected, when it was thought a disgrace for a woman (excepting on holiday occasions) to be seen in the taproom of a public-house; but of late years the obloquy has lost its effect, and the public taprooms of many alehouses are filled with men, women, and children, on all occasions.'[4]

Probably the most important measure for the suppression of crime during the period we are considering, was an Act which was passed in 1773 making it possible for felons and other

[1] *The Police of the Metropolis*, pp. 88, 353.
[2] Ibid. pp. 23, 24, 91, 92, 293. [3] Ibid. pp. 11, 12. [4] Ibid. pp. 34, 35.

malefactors who escaped from England to Scotland or from Scotland to England to be arrested in either country and sent back to the place where their offences were committed.[1] This measure, which had been so long and so strangely delayed, completed the union between the two countries, diminished greatly the chances of the escape of criminals, and was especially useful in improving the condition of the border, which had been for generations a great centre of violent crime.

The roads were still scandalously insecure, and the English highwayman was a striking and conspicuous figure through the whole of the eighteenth century. William IV. was accustomed to relate how his great-grandfather George II., when walking alone in Kensington Gardens, was robbed by a single highwayman who climbed over the wall, and pleading his great distress, and with a manner of much deference, deprived the King of his purse, his watch, and his buckles.[2] Even in the most central parts of London, highway robberies were not unfrequent. Thus, George IV., when Prince of Wales, and the Duke of York were robbed on Hay Hill near Berkeley Square. Two daughters of Admiral Holborn were driving across St. James's Square on their return from the opera, when a single footpad stopped their carriage and carried off their watches and jewels. The Neapolitan Ambassador, though two footmen stood behind his carriage, was stopped in Grosvenor Square and robbed of his watch and money, and Walpole describes a similar robbery in Piccadilly within fifty yards of his own house. On the mail coaches arms were constantly carried for protection, and there are numerous accounts of men who were shot when attacking them. The roads in the immediate neighbourhood of London were infested with highwaymen, and solitary and unarmed travellers rarely ventured after nightfall to traverse Hounslow Heath, or Blackheath, or Clapham or Finchley Common. At Kensington, as late as the beginning of the present century, it was customary on Sunday evenings to ring a bell at intervals, in order that the pleasure seekers from London might assemble in sufficient numbers to return in safety. The Angel Inn at Islington was a favourite resting place of timid travellers to

[1] 13 Geo. III. c. 31.

[2] Greville's *Memoirs of the Reign of Queen Victoria*, ii. 215.

London who arrived towards the evening, while the braver assembled near the end of John Street, where, when a sufficient number had collected, an armed patrol was appointed to escort them across the dangerous space that separated them from the great City. Men of business settled at Norwood and at Dulwich, when they returned from London after business hours, used to appoint a place of rendezvous from which they proceeded in a body for mutual protection, and it was found necessary to protect the roads leading to the public gardens by patrols of horse.[1]

The English highwaymen were an altogether different class, from the savage and half-famished brigands who found a refuge in the forests of Germany and among the mountains of Italy and Spain. They were in general singularly free from ferocity, and a considerable proportion of them were not habitual criminals. Broken tradesmen and even young men of position, who had ruined themselves by dissipation, not unfrequently went upon the road, and if they escaped detection returned again to respectable life. On one occasion a London print cutter, on the road to Enfield, was stopped by a single highwayman whom he recognised as a tradesman in the City. He addressed him by his name, and the detected robber at once blew out his own brains. Favourite actors and other popular heroes, when stopped by highwaymen, were sometimes allowed to pass unmolested as soon as they were recognised; and if the robbed person asked for sufficient money to continue his journey, the request was generally granted. Few things in English life appeared more strange and more scandalous to foreigners than the extraordinary insecurity of the roads around the English capital, although there were neither mountains nor great woods to give shelter to robbers. They ascribed it to the want of that mounted police called the 'Maréchaussée' which protected the French roads; to the forms of English freedom which made it difficult or impossible to arrest men on suspicion and to demand their papers, and especially to the extreme severity of the penal code which

[1] For many particulars about the highwaymen of the eighteenth century, see Andrews' *Eighteenth Century*, pp. 228-246. Walker's *The Original*, pp. 40, 41. Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p. 641. See, too, the numerous cases referred to in the index of the *Annual Register*, under the head 'Robbery.'

discouraged informers and induced juries to avail themselves of any pretext to acquit criminals.[1]

Another prevalent form of violence, which in the eyes of the law was a crime of the deepest turpitude, was duelling. Few facts in the moral history of Europe are more curious than the stringency with which the practice was enforced by public opinion, in Catholic countries and in ages when faith was almost unchallenged and when all heterodoxy was suppressed by law, although the Church had pronounced it to be a sin of that 'mortal' kind which excludes from heaven. In England, if the Church did not profess to speak in as authoritative language as Catholicism, the law at least recognised no distinction between the killing of a man in a duel and premeditated murder, and the seconds as well as the principals were involved in the guilt. The Star Chamber had made special efforts to suppress duelling, and Bacon was conspicuously opposed to it, but in general judges and juries seem to have combined to shield the culprits, and there was as yet little or no sign of a turn of opinion. In France, it is true, both Voltaire and Rousseau wrote strongly against duelling, and the downfall of feudalism at the Revolution probably accelerated its fall. In England, Paley, and also the Evangelical leaders, strongly condemned it, but the practice, in some cases, was so stringently enforced by opinion that the most serious moralists hesitated. Dr. Johnson maintained that in the existing state of opinion a man who fought a duel to avoid a stigma on his honour, was only exercising his legitimate right of self defence.[2] Bentham used very similar language, though he pointed out with great force the evils and absurdities of duels, and ascribed their prevalence to the deficiency of legislation, which had provided no adequate means for the protection of honour.[3] Wilberforce himself, was on one occasion challenged by a West Indian captain, and he mentions that Stephen, who was one of the ablest men in the early Evangelical party, confessed to him that his 'strongest temptations were to duelling.'[4] On the occasion of Pitt's

[1] See an interesting chapter on this subject in *L'Angleterre au Commencement du XIX^e siècle*, par le Duc de Levis, ch. iii.

[2] Croker's *Boswell*, pp. 239, 240, 254, 728.

[3] *Traité de Législation*, ii. 342–351.

[4] *Wilberforce's Life*, i. 356, ii. 93.

duel with Tierney in 1798, Wilberforce desired to bring the subject before the House of Commons in the form of a resolution, but he found that he could not count upon more than five or six members to support him, and accordingly relinquished his intention.[1] The immense number of conspicuous men, and especially of conspicuous statesmen, who fought duels during the eighteenth century is very striking. We have already had occasion to notice as considerable political events the duels of Lord Mohun with the Duke of Hamilton; of Wilkes with Martin; of the Duke of York with Colonel Lennox, and of Whateley with Governor Temple. Among the Prime Ministers of George III., Shelburne fought with Colonel Fullerton, Pitt with Tierney, and Fox with Adam; and at a later period, Canning fought with Castlereagh, the Duke of Wellington fought with Lord Winchilsea, and Peel twice challenged political opponents. These are but a few out of many examples that might be given. No revolution of public sentiment has been more remarkable than that which in the space of little more than a generation has banished from England, and in a great measure from Europe, this evil custom which had so long defied the condemnation both of the Church and of the Law.

It is impossible, I think, to trace the history of crime, of the treatment of criminals, of the treatment of debtors, and of the maintenance of order, without acknowledging the enormous improvement which has in these fields, at least, been effected in England, as in most other countries, since the eighteenth century. The tone of life and manners has become indisputably gentler and more humane, and men recoil with a new energy of repulsion from brutality, violence, and wrong. It is difficult to measure the change that must have passed over the public mind since the days when the lunatics in Bedlam were constantly spoken of as one of the sights of London; when the maintenance of the African slave trade was a foremost object of English commercial policy; when men and even women were publicly whipped through the streets; when skulls lined the top of Temple Bar, and rotting corpses hung on gibbets along the Edgware Road; when prisoners exposed in the pillory

[1] *Wilberforce's Life*, i. 280–284.

not unfrequently died through the ill usage of the mob, and when the procession every six weeks of condemned criminals to Tyburn was one of the great festivals of London. A similar change is shown in the abolition of the old modes of recruiting for the army and navy; in the character of public amusements; in the treatment of boys at school; in the attention that is paid in the houses of the rich to the comfort and health of their servants. Improved roads, improved police and improved legislation have altogether extirpated some forms of crime and greatly diminished others. The wholesale cattle stealing of the Highlands, highway robbery, piracy and kidnapping, are now things of the past. Smuggling, which once educated hundreds, if not thousands, into systematic lawlessness, has sunk into insignificant dimensions. Riots have become comparatively rare and inconsiderable. If theological fanaticism burns in some quarters more fiercely than in the eighteenth century, intolerance at least finds no longer any sanction in English law, and the circle of permissible discussion recognised by public opinion has been immensely enlarged. In the upper classes duelling has disappeared; drunkenness has become very rare; gambling, though it has probably greatly increased in the form of reckless and dishonest speculation, has in other respects declined, and the canons of good society have diminished coarseness, and banished profane swearing from conversation.

All these signs of improvement are incontestable, but in nearly all these respects the latter part of the century was greatly superior to the beginning. In other forms of morals the comparison is more dubious. Towards the close of the century especially, there were loud complaints of growing vice in high quarters. The many conspicuous scandals in the royal family; the public relations of the Duke of Grafton, when Prime Minister, with Nancy Parsons; the passion at one period for masquerades and at another period for ballet dancing, and above all the growing number of divorces, were cited as illustrations. Bills for preventing the intermarriage of the offending parties were carried through the House of Lords in 1771 and in 1779, but on both occasions rejected by the Commons.[1] A Bishop of Durham in 1798 gravely assured the House

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxv. 227.

of Lords that the French, despairing of overthrowing England by arms, had formed a deliberate and subtle design to corrupt her morals, and had for that purpose sent over a number of ballet dancers.[1] Lord Auckland noticed in 1800, that in the space of 130 years there had been 132 divorces by Act of Parliament. Of these only eight had taken place in the first forty-five years, fifty in the next sixty years, and seventy-four in the last twenty-five years. In the four years immediately preceding the Session in which he spoke, twenty-nine divorce bills had been carried and five others rejected.[2]

Evidence, however, of this kind appears to me to be of very little value. Each generation has its censors who pronounce it to be altogether extraordinary in its depravity, and these denunciations are sometimes even a sign of progress, for they merely show that men are more conscious of the evils around them; have raised their standard of excellence, and have learned to lay an increased stress upon moral improvement. This was very eminently the case at the close of the last century when the Methodist and Evangelical movements were at their height. In the 'Practical Piety' of Wilberforce; in two short treatises of Hannah More, and in some of the essays of Vicesimus Knox we have the views of leading Evangelicals on the morals of the upper classes; and while they sufficiently show that those classes were far from conforming to the Evangelical standard, they do not furnish any real proof of deterioration. The mere coincidence of a few great scandals is often purely fortuitous, and the number of divorces is certainly no sure index of the morals of society. It is a notorious fact that the lowest standard of domestic morality in Europe may often be found in countries, and in periods, in which divorce was absolutely forbidden, or in classes in which it never takes place; nor is there, I believe, any real reason to think that the standard of domestic morals in England has been lowered by the great multiplication of divorces which has followed the Divorce Law of 1857. In this case the multiplication has been the obvious consequence of a law which made a process, which before was extremely difficult and extremely expensive,

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxiii. 1307.

[2] Ibid. xxxv. 244.

both easy and cheap. But where no change in the law has been effected, it would be very rash to infer that a public opinion which acquiesces placidly in conjugal infidelity, or which condemns the victims of unhappy marriages to lifelong misery and sin, is of a higher order than a public opinion which in such cases permits and encourages divorce. In the eighteenth century the practice in England relating to it was incredibly absurd. All matrimonial cases were placed under the Ecclesiastical Courts, and the law of England, following the doctrine of Catholicism and the canon law, pronounced that while separation 'a mensâ et thoro' might in some cases be permitted, an absolute dissolution of a valid and duly accomplished marriage, was in all cases a sin against God. And from this position the singular inference was drawn, that it should only be permitted by special Act of Parliament, and at the cost of several thousand pounds. The fact that the small class of persons who were able and willing to resort to this remedy had increased is surely no considerable index of growing depravity, and it may be much more than balanced by the immense improvement in the marriage relation which was effected by the Act of Lord Hardwicke, suppressing or diminishing the enormous abuses of clandestine marriages.

At the same time, it is certain, that in this field of morals there has been no improvement at all commensurate with that which has taken place in the field of philanthropy, and it is probable that the tendency has been in the opposite direction. This class of vices naturally increases with the increased luxury of a wealthy society, with the larger place which town life holds in the existence of the wealthy, and especially with the increasingly cosmopolitan character which European society has assumed. It is possible also, that it may have been more largely affected than other departments of morals, by that decline of theological beliefs which was so manifest in the closing years of the eighteenth century, and which is certainly not less apparent in our own day.

The distinctive virtues of the eighteenth century were not those which spring from passionate or definite religious convictions. For these we must look rather to the two centuries that preceded it. In its closing years, it is true, the Methodist

and Evangelical movements, and the strong conflicting passions aroused by the French Revolution, somewhat altered its character; but in general it was an unimpassioned and unheroic age, singularly devoid of both religious and political enthusiasm, and much more remarkable for intellectual than for high moral achievements. It was pre-eminently a century of good sense; of sobriety of thought and action; of growing toleration and humanity; of declining superstition; of rapidly extending knowledge; of great hopefulness about the future. In England, we must add to these characteristics a steady national progress; a free and temperate government; a constantly increasing respect for law; a remarkable absence of class warfare, and of great political and religious convulsions.

The reforming spirit was, however, much weaker than at present, and that extreme activity of the philanthropic spirit, which is so characteristic of modern English life, had but just begun. This spirit has been largely stimulated by the Evangelical revival; by the great development of the press, which has brought into vivid relief innumerable forms of long unnoticed suffering, and also, perhaps, by the democratic movement which has forced the wants of the humbler classes into attention. In comparing, however, from this point of view, the England of the last century with that of our own day, it is necessary to remember that during the greater part of the eighteenth century, society was so organised that the demand for charitable and philanthropic exertions was considerably less than it now is. Before the existing industrial system had grown up, and before the vast agglomerations of population in the great towns, industry in all its branches was much less fluctuating than at present, and the permanent relation between classes was closer and more stable. The country gentleman lived nearly the whole year among his people. A great proportion of the agricultural labourers lived in the houses of the farmers. The common land and the plot of ground, which, in the early years of the century, still surrounded the married labourer's cottage, preserved him from the extremes of want. The poor law system was lavishly administered, and the obstacles which the law of settlement put in the way of the migration of the agricultural poor, stereotyped the features of English country

life. The price of corn till near the close of the century was low and steady. Extreme want was rare, and the standard of comfort was low. Manufacturing industry was, to a large extent, a mere adjunct of agriculture, carried on in cottages scattered through the agricultural districts. In the towns, the apprentice system; the long contracts between the master and his journeymen; the habit of apprentices, and often journeymen, living under the roof of their master, and the settlement of wages by law, which was not yet extinct, mitigated the fluctuations of industry. The population was also comparatively small, and English industry was much less closely connected than at present with the vast and complex vicissitudes of foreign markets.

Legislation concerned itself much less than in our day with social abuses. The prevention of crime, and the regulation of commercial interests, were sedulously, if not always wisely, attended to; but there were few attempts during the Hanoverian period to deal with special evils and forms of suffering among the poor, and in spite of occasional laws relating to gaming, lotteries, disorderly houses, and the observance of Sunday, there was in general little disposition to regulate habits, and restrain private vices, by law. The greater portion of the legislation directly bearing on the condition of the poor consisted of extensions, restrictions, and modifications of the poor law. Numerous measures were passed during this period, defining the nature and conditions of relief; the circumstances by which a parish settlement might be lost or gained; the power of churchwardens and overseers to hire out, with the assent of two justices of the peace, pauper children, till they were twenty-one, as 'parish apprentices.'[1] A disclosure of the appalling mortality among young children in the London workhouses was met by a merciful Act, which appears to have been principally due to Hanway, establishing separate nurseries in the country for these children.[2] Some great evils, which had been discovered in private madhouses, and some striking instances of persons improperly confined, produced much scandal,

[1] The laws relating to the poor have been collected in two volumes by Cunningham Glen. On the parish apprentices, see especially 18 George III. c. 47, 20 George III. c. 36, 32 George III. c. 57.

[2] 7 George III. c. 39. Pugh's *Life of Hanway*, p. 190.

a parliamentary inquiry, and some careful legislation,[1] and another law endeavoured to put an end to horrible abuses which had grown up in the treatment of children who were employed to sweep chimneys.[2] I have spoken already of the laws for regulating wages and hours of work; for improving the condition of prisons, and for alleviating the state of debtors; and there are a few instances of new forms of charity being assisted by moderate and temporary parliamentary grants.

But on the whole this class of subjects occupies a very small place in the legislation of the eighteenth century, though a great amount of private benevolence was devoted to it. The London charities were large and excellent, and an intelligent French traveller, who carefully investigated them in the early years of the present century, was especially struck with their complete independence of the Government, and with the very large proportion of them which had grown up during the latter half of the eighteenth century.[3] A detailed examination would, I believe, show that London already ranked very high, in its charitable institutions, among the cities of the world.[4] Two important, though by no means uncontested, forms of charity, which had already existed on the Continent, appear to have arisen in England for the first time in the eighteenth century. The first foundling hospital in England was established through the exertions of Captain Coram in 1739, and the first Magdalen Asylum in 1769. In addition to the foundling hospitals and orphanages

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xv. 1283–1291. Walpole's *George III.* i. 244. 14 George III. c. 49. 26 George III. c. 91. *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1772, pp. 195, 196, 340, 341, 589, 590; 1773, p. 99.

[2] 28 George III. c. 48.

[3] De Levis, *L'Angleterre au Commencement du dix-neuvième siècle*, ch. viii.

[4] See Seymour's *Survey of London*, and a full catalogue of the London charitable institutions with the dates of their foundation in Colquhoun's *Police of the Metropolis*, pp. 374–380. Colquhoun, in 1795, estimates the poor rates for the metropolis (including an adjoining district of Middlesex and Surrey) at 245,000*l.* a year. In addition to this, he estimates the annual expense of

1. Supporting charity schools for educating the poor at £10,000
2. Asylums for the relief of objects of charity and humanity, supported by annual contributions, at 25,000
3. Asylums, hospitals, and dispensaries, for the sick, lame, diseased, and afflicted, at 50,000
4. Institutions for benevolent, charitable, and humane purposes, 704 societies, at 120,000
5. Private charities at . . 150,000
6. Endowed establishments at 150,000

Total estimate per annum, 750,000*l.*

which already existed, some attempts were made in the latter half of the century to purify the sources of crime by asylums for deserted girls, young delinquents, and children of criminal parents, and by a society, founded by Hanway, for collecting destitute boys from the street in order to educate them as sailors. A society for the relief of persons confined for small debts was founded in 1772, and in the work of improving the condition of prisoners, its treasurer, James Neild, deserves to rank only second to Howard.[1] There were numerous instances of large subscriptions raised for special purposes of benevolence, such as providing comforts for prisoners of war, or for soldiers and their families, and these subscriptions had sometimes a very cosmopolitan character. Large sums were raised from private sources in England to assist the Corsicans in their struggle with the French, and the Poles in their struggle with the Russians.[2] There was a subscription for the destitute Portuguese after the earthquake at Lisbon, and in the beginning of the French Revolution more than seventy thousand pounds were subscribed for the assistance of French refugees.

Charities of this description do not appear to me to have been to any considerable extent due to the religious revival at the close of the century. There had always been much unobtrusive charity in England, and causes in a great degree independent of religion had contributed to stimulate it. There are fashions of feeling as well as fashions of thought, and with the softening manners of the closing years of the century, benevolence and philanthropy had undoubtedly acquired a higher place in the category of virtues. It was the complaint of a hostile critic, that Fielding had set the fashion of reducing all virtue to good affections in contradiction to moral obligation and a sense of duty, and of representing goodness of heart as a sufficient substitute for moral virtues.[3] The ideal of excellence which was taught by Shaftesbury in England, and by Voltaire in France, and the strain of sentiment which was at once sustained and reflected by the writings of Rousseau, was very apparent in English life; and Evangelical writers, so far from denying the

[1] Nichols's *Illustrations of the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 689–706.

[2] See a speech of Fox, *Parl. Hist.* xxv. 171.

[3] Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, p. 215. See, too, a remarkable essay 'On Novel Reading,' by Vicesimus Knox, *Essays*, i. No. xiv.

strong spirit of benevolence outside their sect, were inclined to reproach their contemporaries with the exclusive and excessive stress they laid upon that virtue.[1] There was, however, a large class of institutions which were distinctly traceable to the religious revival. The Evangelical party, though it as yet only included a minority of the clergy, had already drawn to itself the strongest religious enthusiasm in the nation, and had become the pre-eminent source of religious activity. In the older religious societies it had little weight, but nearly all the popular religious literature of the time, nearly every fresh departure, nearly every new organisation which grew up in the English religious world, was mainly due to it. The largest of them were of a purely religious character, with which we have no concern here. Thus the London Missionary Society, which was established in 1795; the Church Missionary Society, which was established in 1799; the Religious Tract Society, which was established in the same year, and which followed in the steps of a tract society that had been founded by Wesley seventeen years before; the British and Foreign Bible Society, which was established in 1802, and all, or nearly all, the Nonconformist religions societies which arose about this period, were distinctly Evangelical. The Society for the Reformation of Manners, imitated from the society of the same name which had existed at the close of the seventeenth century, was not indeed an Evangelical society, but it owed its origin to Wilberforce; and the Association for Securing a Better Observance of Sunday consisted chiefly of Evangelical members. But in almost all forms of purely secular

[1] Thus Hannah More says that the age in which she wrote was pre-eminently 'the age of benevolence.' 'Liberality flows with a full tide through a thousand channels. There is scarcely a newspaper but records some meeting of men of fortune for the most salutary purposes. The noble and numberless structures for the relief of distress which are the ornament and glory of our metropolis, proclaim a species of munificence unknown to former ages. Subscriptions, not only to hospitals, but to various other valuable institutions, are obtained almost as soon as solicited.' But she at the same time asks 'whether it be not the fashion rather to consider benevolence as a substitute for Christianity, than as an evidence of it?' And she adds, 'It seems to be one of the reigning errors among the better sort to reduce all religion into benevolence, and all benevolence into almsgiving.' *On the Religion of the Fashionable World*, Works, xi. 87–91. She has, also, some good remarks upon the way in which the restriction of 'That broad shade of protection, patronage, and maintenance, which the widespread bounty of their forefathers stretched out over whole villages,' and the 'general alteration of habits and manners,' had recently increased the necessities for charity.

charity, a new impulse was also given; and a characteristic feature of English life in the closing years of the century, was the increasing number of persons—especially unmarried women—who were making works of charity the main business of their lives. 'There is no class of persons,' Wilberforce once said, 'whose condition has been more improved within my recollection than that of unmarried women. Formerly there seemed to be nothing useful in which they could be naturally busy, but now they may always find an object in attending to the poor.'[1]

The services of the rising party to religious education were also very considerable. It is a remarkable fact that during the whole of the eighteenth century the task of educating the English poor, as far as it was undertaken at all, was left to the different religious denominations, and to the benevolence of individuals and voluntary associations without the smallest assistance from the Government. The old law which forbade the opening of any school without the licence of a bishop, though still in force, had become obsolete; but if the Government did not impede, it at least did nothing whatever to support education. There were still many endowed schools dating from an earlier period, which gave free education to many children, and there had been, as we have seen, a great and beneficent movement for the erection of parochial charity schools under Anne. It was warmly patronised by the Queen, but it was the work of private charity, entirely unassisted by Parliament; and for more than sixty years after the death of Anne, the history of education in England is almost a blank. Scotland, indeed, and the New England colonies had long enjoyed excellent systems of popular education, and even in Ireland there were the Charter Schools endowed by the Irish Parliament; but in England it was the prevailing doctrine that the education of the people was entirely foreign to the duties of Government, and it was a very common belief that education would only unfit the poor for the life that was allotted to them. New charity schools were no doubt occasionally erected. Private enterprise multiplied cheap schools; landlords occasionally founded schools on their estates, and the apprentice system in some small measure discharged the functions of a system of education; but unless we except

[1] *Wilberforce's Life*, i. 238.

the circulating schools in Wales,[1] there is, I believe, during this long period, no evidence of any considerable attempt to instruct the poor.

The fact is especially remarkable when we remember how eminently the eighteenth century was a century of extending knowledge, and how large a place education held in the thoughts of legislators on the Continent. As early as 1717, Frederick William I. had issued an edict making education compulsory in Prussia, and not less than seventeen hundred schools for the poor are said to have been established in Prussia during his reign. Frederick the Great energetically pursued the same policy, and some years before the outbreak of the French Revolution, there were laws in almost every little German State, obliging parents to send their children to schools which had been established under the direction of ecclesiastics. Even the Catholic States of Germany, though in general considerably behind the Protestant ones, had thrown themselves ardently into the same career. Maria Theresa through her whole reign made the education of her people one of the great objects of her policy, and Joseph II. though with feebler steps followed her example. The writings of Rousseau, and in the last years of the century, the example and system of Pestalozzi had given an immense impulse to the cause of education throughout the Continent. But in England this movement appears for a long time to have been entirely unfelt, and the first traces of a revived interest in education seem to be due to the religious movement. A sermon preached at Cambridge by Bishop Porteus in 1768, on the subject of religious education at the Universities, induced a Norfolk gentleman named Norris to found at Cambridge a professorship for giving lectures on the doctrines of revealed religion;[2] while among the poor an important step was taken by the establishment of Sunday schools. Raikes of Gloucester, whose first schools were set up in 1781, is generally spoken of as their originator, but it is certain that there were a few isolated Sunday schools at an earlier date. To Raikes, however, far more than to any other man, the Sunday-school system owes its real importance. Some of the clergy, and among others Bishop Horsley, looked on it with suspicion

[1] See vol. ii. p. 604.

[2] Hodgson's *Life of Porteus*, pp. 18, 19.

and dislike, but it spread rapidly, and was especially favoured by the Evangelical party. The Sunday School Society was established in 1785, and two years later, not less than two hundred thousand children are said to have been receiving instruction in Sunday schools.[1] Wesley strongly advocated them; Hannah More greatly assisted the movement both by her influence and by her pen, and Rowland Hill is said to have been the first to introduce Sunday schools into London.[2]

The establishment of any real system of secular national education in England belongs altogether to the nineteenth century, for although the systems of Bell and Lancaster were brought before the English public in 1797 and 1798, nothing was yet done to put them into action. About the same time, Malthus, following in the steps of Adam Smith, urged in impressive language the extreme national importance of a general system of popular instruction; the scandal and the danger of leaving the education of the lower classes to a few Sunday schools, directed and supported by private individuals.[3] For a long time, however, these warnings were little attended to. The deep and honourable distrust of all encroachments of Government, which was characteristic of Englishmen in the eighteenth century, has produced many advantages, but often at a heavy price. Part of that price has been that England until very lately had no system of national education at all comparable with that of many continental nations, or at all worthy of her own place among civilised Powers.

In England, as in the chief nations on the Continent, the closing years of the century were marked by a great widening of the national sympathies, which were no longer confined by the lines of country, race, or creed. The increased sense of wrongs done to savage and pagan races was very evident. The ill-treatment, by the English, of the Caribbees in the island of St. Vincent, was the subject of a parliamentary inquiry and of much discussion in 1773;[4] and the impeachment of Warren Hastings has a great significance in English moral history, as representing the awakening of the national conscience to its

[1] Tyerman's *Life of Wesley*, iii. 500.

[2] Sidney's *Life of Rowland Hill*, ch. xx

[3] *On Population*, book iv. ch. viii.

[4] Walpole's *Last Journals*, i. 176–183.

responsibility towards subject races. But the most conspicuous illustration of this kind is to be found in that great movement for the abolition of the slave trade, which became, in the last years of the century, one of the chief forms of English philanthropy.

The more important facts in the early history of slavery and of the British slave trade have been already related,[1] and they are in themselves sufficient to show the vast revolution which has been effected in English public sentiment. A few voices had indeed been heard from a very early period protesting against the trade. Even in the seventeenth century, George Fox, the founder of Quakerism; Richard Baxter; Morgan Godwyn, a clergyman of the established Church; and one or two other writers had denounced it; and Aphra Behn, who had herself witnessed slavery in the West Indies, had brought the wrongs of the negroes before the public in a novel called 'Oronooko,' which was afterwards turned into a play by Southern. In the following century, many English writers had dwelt on the barbarity of the slave trade before any serious effort had been made to restrain it. Defoe condemned it in some powerful lines in his poem on 'The Reformation of Manners,' which appeared in 1702, and he afterwards urged a more humane treatment of negroes in his 'Life of Colonel Jacque.' Thomson, Savage, and Shenstone among poets; Heylin, Warburton, and Paley among divines; Hutcheson, Adam Smith, and Beattie among philosophers, may all be cited as early enemies of the slave trade, and a few books of travels had already described its horrors. But in the sphere of politics no such reprobation was shown, and the generation that applauded the conquests of Chatham, as well as the generation that made the Peace of Utrecht, considered the extension of the slave trade a capital object of English commercial policy. The Assiento Treaty, as we have seen, had given England the monopoly of the slave trade to the Spanish colonies, and it was a boast of Chatham, that his conquests in Africa had placed almost the whole slave trade in English hands.[2]

An Act of 1750 had already elaborately regulated the trade. Its preamble described it as very advantageous to Great Britain,

[1] Vol. ii. pp. 11–17. [2] Walpole's *George III.* i. 227, 228.

and as necessary to her colonies, but it is a remarkable fact that it contained a clause expressly providing for the security of the natives. 'No master of a ship,' it said, 'shall, by fraud, force, or violence, or by any other indirect practice whatsoever, take on board or carry away from the coast of Africa any negro or native of that country, or commit, or suffer to be committed, any violence on the natives to the prejudice of the said trade; and every person so offending shall, for every such offence, forfeit 100*l*.'[1] As might have been expected, and as subsequent inquiries abundantly proved, these words proved a mockery and a dead letter, but they show that although the slave trade was uniformly conducted with the most barefaced violence and fraud, the existence of some duty to the natives was at least recognised by the legislators. In 1768, a few years after the war of Chatham, it was estimated that not less than 97,000 negroes were taken from Africa in a single year.[2]

The signs, however, of a growing awakening to the evils of the trade were rapidly multiplied, and in a few years before the outbreak of the American War some important facts had occurred. A controversy which had long been pending, relating to the legality of the state of servitude in England, was at this time finally decided. Numerous slaves had been, in the course of the century, brought to England, held in servitude in England, stopped by force when they left their masters, and even publicly advertised for sale. York and Talbot, the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General in 1729, had given it as their opinion that a slave, by being brought from the West Indies into Great Britain, was not emancipated, but might be legally compelled to return to the plantations. This doctrine, however, had been frequently disputed, and especially by Granville Sharp, one of the earliest and most illustrious of that long line of philanthropists who have devoted their lives to the defence of the negroes. At last, in 1772, the case of an African slave named Somerset, who had been brought to England, had left his master, and had afterwards been forcibly seized for the purpose of being carried out of the kingdom and sold in Jamaica, was brought before Lord Mansfield, and that great judge, after long deliberation, decided that Somerset must

[1] 23 George II. c. 31. [2] Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iii. 484.

be discharged, and that every slave, as soon as he touched English ground, acquired his freedom.

Two other facts of great moment speedily followed. John Wesley, who had come in personal contact with American slaves as early as 1736,[1] published, in 1774, his 'Thoughts on Slavery,' strongly denouncing the system; and two years later David Hartley, the son of the metaphysician, for the first time brought the question before Parliament, by moving a resolution 'that the slave trade was contrary to the laws of God and the rights of man.' The motion was seconded by Sir George Savile, but it was easily defeated, and appears to have excited but little attention.

Up to this time the steadiest and most persistent opponents of the slave trade had been the Quakers. They had passed resolutions condemning it in 1727 and in 1758. In 1761 they excluded from membership, any Quaker who was concerned in the trade, and in 1763 they branded as criminal all who in any way encouraged or abetted it. In America, however, the Quakers were less inflexible in their opposition, and they appear to have in general kept slaves like their fellow-colonists, though they were remarkable for the humanity with which they treated them and the frequency with which they emancipated them. They in general distinguished between the possession and the importation of slaves, but there were always some among them who considered the whole system of slavery criminal, and a strong movement in favour of abolition sprang up a few years before the revolutionary contest with England, chiefly in the Quaker province of Pennsylvania.[2] In 1754, in 1755, in 1774 and in 1776, the subject was brought forward at their yearly meetings, and in general the American Quakers seem to have made it their rule to abstain from importing or purchasing slaves, though they did not absolutely condemn the keeping of slaves.[3] About 1770 a few Quakers began to form associations in the middle provinces of North America to discourage the introduction of slaves into

[1] His brother, Charles Wesley, had during this journey formed a very strong opinion of the extreme barbarities inflicted on slaves in the Carolinas. See a striking passage from his journal in Grahame's *History of the United States*, iii. 422.

[2] Grahame's *History of the United States*, iii. 404. Clarkson's *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, i. 112–116, 132–180. Kalm's *Travels in North America*, Pinkerton, xvii. 501.

[3] See Clarkson, i. 143–145.

their neighbourhood and to encourage manumission, and it was noticed that several persons of different creeds began to liberate their slaves, and to co-operate for the purpose of ameliorating their lot.[1] Benjamin Franklin, among others, warmly supported the movement.

As I have already observed, conditions of climate, and therefore of cultivation, ultimately determined the course of negro slavery in America, and while in the Northern States and in Pennsylvania slaves were few, manumission frequent, and the laws relating to negroes comparatively mild, the slave codes of Virginia, Maryland, and the Carolinas were of extreme ferocity,[2] and instances of glaring and extraordinary inhumanity to negroes were very numerous in the Southern colonies, and the English West Indies.[3] The grotesque absurdity of slave owners signing a 'Declaration of Independence' which asserted the inalienable right of every man to liberty and equality was not unfelt, but the original draft of the Declaration of Independence as drawn up by Jefferson contained a passage strongly censuring the slave trade, and blaming the King of England for having forced it upon America. By the desire of some of the Southern representatives, this passage was expunged.

Dean Tucker, in a pamphlet published in 1785, has devoted some remarkable pages to the English slave trade. No man living, he says, could sincerely approve of the slave trade as it is actually conducted, and he declares that 'the murders committed in the course of it, reckoning from the beginning of it to the present hour, almost exceed the power of numbers

[1] Clarkson, i. pp. 185–192.

[2] An excellent summary of the laws on slavery in the different colonies will be found in Mr. H. C. Lodge's *Short History of the English Colonies in America* (1882).

[3] Many instances of the atrocious barbarities practised on slaves in the American colonies and in the English West India Islands, will be found in Benezet's *Historical Account of Guinea and of the Slave Trade*. Grahame's *History of the United States*, iii. 422, 423. 'The negroes in our colonies,' said Burke, 'endure a slavery more complete, and attended with far worse circumstances, than what any people in their condition suffer in any other part of the world, or have suffered in any other period of time. Proofs of this are not wanting.' *An Account of the European Settlements in America*, ii. 124. See, too, the whole chapter. Paley says, 'From all that can be learned by the accounts of the people upon the spot, the inordinate authority which the plantation laws confer upon the slaveholder is exercised by the English slaveholder especially, with rigour and brutality.' *Moral Philosophy*, book iii. ch. iii.

to ascertain. Yet,' he continues, 'reason and humanity recoil in vain. For the trade in human blood is still carried on not only with impunity but also with the consent, approbation, and even assistance of the British Legislature,' and it is never likely to be suppressed, till it is proved that slavery is economically wasteful, and that sugar can be produced more cheaply by free labour. Referring to the state of the slaves, he asserts that it is a notorious and incontrovertible fact 'that the English planters in general (doubtless there are exceptions) treat their slaves, or suffer them to be treated, with a greater degree of inhumanity than the planters of any other European nation.' He ascribes this 'excess of barbarity' partly to the fact that the English planters have more slaves than those of any other nation, and therefore think it necessary to protect themselves by a greater severity from combinations or revolts, but partly also to the large amount of self-government the English colonies enjoy. 'The English planters are more their own masters, their own lawgivers in their assemblies; also the interpreters, the judges (as jurymen) and the executioners of their laws, than those of any other nation. The very form of the English constitution, originally calculated for the preservation of liberty, tends in this instance to destroy it. Consequently the English planters can indulge themselves in a greater degree of passion and revenge than would be permitted under the absolute governments of France, Spain, Portugal, or Denmark.' In proof of this assertion Tucker refers to the Code Noir of France, and he adds: 'The regulations of the Spanish Government respecting negro slaves are still more humane, laying a foundation for the sober and industrious among them, by allowing them the profits of two days' labour in each week, to purchase their own liberty in the course of a few years. And it may be observed in general, that though absolute governments are tyrannical in themselves, yet they are a great check on the tyranny of their intermediate subjects, being ready to protect the helpless from being oppressed by any but themselves. This is remarkably verified in the case of those slaves who live under the Russian, Prussian, and Austrian Governments, compared with the hard fate of others who still groan under the bondage of the nobles of Poland.' In addi-

tion to these reasons, he observes that an unusual proportion of English planters lived habitually in England and consigned the care of their property to bailiffs and overseers, who had a manifest interest in stifling all complaints, and keeping their principals as much as possible in the dark about the management of their estates.[1]

I have already mentioned the attempts that had been made by some American provincial Legislatures, during the colonial period, to discourage the excessive importation of slaves. They appear to have been due mainly or solely to commercial and political reasons, and, as we have seen, were overruled by the British Government. In 1776, however, the Continental Congress passed a memorable resolution, 'that no slaves be imported into any of the thirteen United Colonies.' During the war, the British cruisers very effectually prevented such importation, but, on the attainment of independence, the question was decided independently by the different Legislatures. In the great majority of the States the slave trade was forbidden; but, in spite of the State laws, it was carried on to a considerable extent by New England vessels, and in some of the Southern States it was fully legal. When the Constitution of 1787 was established, there was a long dispute on the subject, and it was finally decided that Georgia and the Carolinas should retain their right of carrying on the slave trade for twenty more years. At this date slavery, as distinguished from the slave trade, had not been actually abolished in any State except Massachusetts; but a measure for its gradual abolition had been adopted in Pennsylvania, and imitated by many Northern States, and there were already active organisations for hastening its abolition, and for alleviating the condition of the slaves.[2]

The British slave trade had been greatly crippled by the war of the American Revolution, and the independence of America cut off permanently one of its great markets. It also very seriously, though indirectly, affected the lot of the negroes in the British West India Islands. The active and profitable

[1] Tucker's *Reflections on the present Matters in dispute between Great Britain and Ireland*, pp 10–12. At the end of the sixteenth century, Bodin had noticed the good treatment of slaves by the Spaniards, *La République*, liv. i. ch. v.

[2] See Hildreth's *History of the United States*, iii. 509–520, iv. 174, 175.

commerce which had long subsisted between those islands and the American colonies had been necessarily interrupted by the war, but it was hoped that it might revive on the establishment of peace. The Shelburne Ministry was especially distinguished for its enlightened commercial views, and in March 1783 Pitt, who was then Chancellor of the Exchequer, brought before Parliament a singularly liberal Bill repealing all the measures prohibiting American ships from trading with the British dominions, and establishing provisionally, and for a limited time, perfect free trade between the United States and the British Empire. The change of Ministry that immediately followed, prevented this measure from being carried; and the Coalition Government which succeeded, contented itself with repealing the prohibitory laws which had existed during the war, and passing a measure, vesting in the Crown for a limited period authority to regulate the commerce with America.[1]

It soon appeared that while the West Indian planters were extremely anxious to reopen free trade with America, a strong opposition to such a policy had grown up. It was desired to confine the trade to these islands to British ships and to the British dominions, and it was contended that by such restrictions the prosperity of Canada, Nova Scotia, and the island of St. John, might be greatly stimulated. Pitt, on returning to power, yielded to the clamour, abandoned the liberal policy of the provisional Bill, consented to refer the whole matter to the Committee of the Privy Council for the Board of Trade, and at last, on the recommendation of that body, and in spite of the protests and warnings of the planters, he agreed to confine the intercourse between the British West India Islands and America to British ships. The result was a destitution, lasting for many years, and falling especially on the negro population. One or two bad seasons and one or two devastating hurricanes aggravated the calamity, and its magnitude is shown in a ghastly report drawn up by a committee of the Assembly of Jamaica. They express their firm conviction that in seven years, and in consequence of the prohibition of foreign supplies, not less than fifteen thousand negroes had perished. 'This number,' they say, 'we firmly believe to have perished of famine, or of diseases

[1] Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iv. 17–20. 23 George III. c. 39.

contracted by scanty and unwholesome diet, between the latter end of 1780 and the beginning of 1787.'[1]

The slave trade revived rapidly after the Peace of 1783, and Liverpool became its special source. It has been computed that between 1783 and 1793 not less than 74,000 negroes were annually transported from Africa to the West Indies. Of these it was estimated that Great Britain imported 38,000, Holland 4,000, Portugal 10,000, Denmark 2,000, and France 20,000. It has also been estimated that of the immense number of 814,000 negroes who were carried from Africa to the West Indies in eleven years, not less than 407,000 were carried in Liverpool ships, and that the town derived from this unholy trade an annual profit of about 298,462*l.*[2]

There were, however, increasing signs that the conscience of England was beginning to awaken to the enormity of the trade. Granville Sharp with an admirable perseverance continued his efforts, and a peculiarly horrible case that occurred in 1783 contributed largely to arrest the attention of the public. The master of a slave ship, called the 'Zong,' finding sickness raging among his negroes, deliberately ordered 132 of them to be flung into the sea. The pretext alleged was that the supply of water had become insufficient, but this pretext was completely disproved. The real motive was a desire to save the owners, who would bear the cost if the negroes died of sickness, while, if they were thrown overboard for the preservation of the ship, it would fall upon the underwriters. There were two trials with conflicting verdicts, but it was clearly laid down in them that the only question at issue was a question of property or cost; that there was nothing in the transaction of the nature of a murderous act, and that the case was legally of exactly the same kind as if it had been horses and not human beings that had been thrown into the sea.[3]

About this time a small Quaker society was formed for the purpose of influencing public opinion in favour of the abolition of the trade, which it did by disseminating tracts, and through the medium of the provincial press; and in 1783, when

[1] Bryan Edwards, *History of the West Indies*, book vi. ch. iv.

[2] Baines' *History of Liverpool*, p. 719.

[3] Stuart's *Memoir of Granville Sharp*, pp. 29–31. Clarkson's *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, i. 95–97.

a Bill for introducing some regulations into the trade was before Parliament, a Quaker petition for its abolition was presented by Sir Cecil Wray. Lord North in a few words expressed his warm admiration for the Quaker body and his sympathy with the object of their petition, but declared that the trade had become 'in some measure necessary to almost every nation in Europe,' and that 'it would be next to an impossibility to induce them to give it up and renounce it for ever.' A similar petition was presented to Parliament from the town of Bridgewater in 1785, and nearly at the same time some of the most powerful champions of abolition appeared in the field. A clergyman named Ramsay, who had lived for many years in the West India Islands, published in 1784 a work on the treatment of the enslaved negroes which attracted much attention and gave rise to a long and acrimonious controversy. In 1786 Thomas Clarkson began his lifelong labours in behalf of the negroes by the publication of his essay on negro slavery. In 1787 Wilberforce agreed to bring the subject before Parliament, and in the same year the 'Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade' was formed in London under the presidency of Granville Sharp.

This society consisted in its origin of only twelve members, most of them being London merchants and the great majority Quakers. Its first business was to define its scope, and the members wisely decided that they would not attempt a crusade against slavery, but would aim only at the abolition of the slave trade and the mitigation of the condition of the negroes.

By adopting this course they greatly diminished the amount of opposition. They avoided the delicate constitutional questions that might be raised if the English Parliament were asked to interfere with the institutions of colonies which had their own Legislatures, and they at the same time took a course which was excellently fitted to mitigate the abuses of slavery. The slave trade was in itself a more horrible thing than the simple maintenance of slavery; and by furnishing the plantations with an unlimited supply of cheap and fresh negro labour, it gave slavery its worst features of atrocity. It took away the one serious restraint of self-interest which prevented the extreme ill-treatment of slaves, and it inevitably produced an enormous

disproportion between the sexes, a total destruction of family life, extreme and general dissoluteness.

It was the opinion of Pitt and of a large number of the opponents of the slave trade, that if this trade were abolished colonial slavery would lose its worst characteristics and that it might at the same time become self-supporting. In North America and also in the Bermudas this had been already achieved, and the result of some measures regulating the condition of negroes in Jamaica appeared to show that if slaves were only compelled to work in moderation, and if family life were duly maintained, the simple increase of population would make the slave trade wholly unnecessary.[1]

The first great work of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, was to collect evidence. Clarkson devoted himself to this task, and the facts collected by him in long and laborious inquiries at Bristol and Liverpool, and afterwards brought before Parliament, revealed a series of horrors which made a deep and lasting impression on the mind and conscience of England. The pretence that the negroes exported from Africa were simply or mainly criminals, was easily dispelled ; and the horrible system of kidnapping, and of desolating native wars by which the trade was sustained, was abundantly shown.

Not less appalling were the horrors of the Middle Passage, and the terrible mortality that attended it. Though the negroes taken from Africa were chiefly strong men, Wilberforce was able to state before Parliament, that of every hundred carried from Africa, seventeen on an average died in about nine weeks, and not more than fifty lived to become effective labourers in our islands.[2] Many in despair tried to starve themselves to death, and an instrument employed by surgeons in cases of lockjaw was in habitual use to defeat their attempts. Others, in spite of all precautions, succeeded in plunging into the sea, and they had been seen flinging up their arms in exultation, and shouting with the triumph of recovered liberty, as they sank beneath the waves. Nor were the abuses of the slave trade confined to the treatment of negroes. The trade had fallen chiefly into the worst hands ; and while it was alleged by

[1] See Macpherson, iv. 150.

[2] Clarkson, ii. 52.

its defenders that it was the nursery of British seamen, it was proved beyond all doubt that in no other department of the British Navy was the mortality so great.

While the Committee were engaged in collecting such evidence, the management of the cause of abolition in Parliament was taken up by William Wilberforce, who conducted it to its final triumph, and whose fame has somewhat eclipsed the memory of the minor agents in the movement. A considerable social position, very eminent social gifts, a large fortune, the weight attaching to the representation of the first county in England, and the still greater weight derived from a most intimate friendship with Pitt, at once made the adhesion of Wilberforce to the cause a matter of great moment. He could not be compared in intellectual power with Pitt, Fox, Burke, or Sheridan, but he stood high in the second line of parliamentary debaters. He was quite capable of mastering in its details a vast and complicated subject, and though he seemed the frailest and feeblest of mortals, he could sway great multitudes of excited men by a clear and popular eloquence, and by the exquisite beauty of his voice and his elocution. He had passed completely under the influence of the Evangelical revival, and he showed something of its weakness and narrowness, as well as of its earnestness and strength. The enormity of drilling militiamen on Sunday afternoons in a time of great public danger, or meeting on that day for recreation or secular instruction, appears to have been in his eyes hardly less than the enormities of the slave trade; and the journals in which he recorded his daily emotions, seem to me to show much of that morbid, exaggerated, and somewhat effeminate self-consciousness, which is the frequent, and indeed the natural, accompaniment, of a constant habit of religious introspection and self-analysis. It would be difficult to speak too highly of the purity and beauty of his career, but something too much has been said of its self-sacrifice. A public man who leads and represents the great religious party of his time, and identifies himself with a small number of conspicuous philanthropic causes, must no doubt sacrifice some of the great prizes of political ambition, but even from a worldly point of view his career is by no means without charm. Of politicians of the same intellectual calibre, very few

exercised so wide an influence as Wilberforce. Few, if any, enjoyed so large an amount of contemporary admiration, and not one has been so canonised by posterity. He encountered, it is true, in his career, some measure of obloquy and disappointment, but probably much less than he would have encountered had he taken an equally prominent part in party warfare. His character, however, if it was not exactly of the heroic type, was at least singularly pure, attractive, and unselfish. It was, perhaps, as free from all taint of sordid and unworthy motives, from all envy, jealousy, and bitterness, as any in modern history, and though a very devoted follower of Pitt, he showed on a few occasions in his political conduct a considerable independence of judgment.

The prospects of the cause in 1788 were exceedingly encouraging. Public opinion was strongly and widely moved, and no less than a hundred and three petitions praying for the abolition of the trade were presented to Parliament. The number may not appear great according to the measure of our time, but it appears to have been at least double of the number that had ever before, even in periods of greatest popular excitement, been presented to Parliament. Among them were petitions from the Corporation of London, and from most of the other leading Corporations in England and Scotland. Bristol, though only second to Liverpool as a centre of the slave trade, sent up a petition for its abolition; and there was a petition from the Chamber of Commerce in Dublin, expressing their satisfaction that Ireland had been unpolluted by the traffic, and promising that if it were abolished in England, they would do the utmost in their power to prevent it from finding any asylum in the ports of Ireland.[1]

Very important measures were in this year taken to diminish or ameliorate the trade. In February, an Order of Council was issued, directing a Committee of the Privy Council to make a thorough inquiry into its condition and abuses; and as Wilberforce was incapacitated by illness, Pitt himself in May introduced and carried a resolution, pledging the House early in the next session of Parliament to take into consideration the peti-

[1] Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iv. 141, 154. Clarkson, i. 491, 496. May's *Const. Hist.* i. 447, 448.

tions that had been presented. Whether the trade should be abolished, or simply regulated, Pitt said, was a question on which he could give no opinion, pending the inquiry which was going on before the Privy Council. Although there was some objection to the tribunal by which the inquiry was to be conducted, and some doubt about the necessity of postponing legislation, there was very little difference of opinion about the great evils of the existing trade. Fox at once, and in the most explicit terms, declared that his opinion on the subject was fully determined: that he was convinced that the slave trade ought not to be regulated, but absolutely destroyed. Burke was little less emphatic. His attention had been already for some time directed to the trade, and in 1780 he had even drawn up a code for its mitigation and ultimate abolition, but had abandoned it through a conviction that it would be impossible to carry it.[1] He now spoke strongly to the effect that the trade was one which ought to be totally abolished, but if this was not now possible, it ought to be regulated at once. All delay in such a matter was criminal.[2]

There was no serious opposition. The resolution pledging the House was unanimously passed, and a few weeks later Sir William Dolben introduced a temporary measure to mitigate the horrors of the middle passage, of which abundant evidence had been already disclosed. Its chief object was to limit the number of negroes who might be carried in slave ships, by establishing a fixed proportion between the cargo and the tonnage, and a few additional regulations were afterwards introduced into the Bill before it became law. The measure was warmly supported by Pitt, who urged, among other arguments, that there was reason to fear that the prospect of a speedy abolition of the trade might for a time aggravate it, by inducing the slave traders to carry as many slaves as possible to the West Indies before Parliament came to a definite decision on the subject. The Bill was violently and persistently opposed in the Commons by the members for Liverpool, and in the Lords by the Chancellor, Lord Thurlow, but it ultimately became law, and it was the first step taken towards the mitigation of the trade.

A cause which was supported by one of the most powerful

[1] *Wilberforce's Life*, i. 152, 153.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xxvii. 495-506.

prime ministers ever known in England, which was equally favoured by the leaders of the Opposition, and which had already excited a strong outburst of popular enthusiasm, seemed not far from its triumph, but 1789 and 1790 passed without any further measure in Parliament than a renewal of Dolben's Act. The report of the Privy Council had indeed now been drawn up, and Wilberforce introduced the subject in a long, eloquent, and comprehensive speech, and moved that the House should go into committee upon it; but although Pitt, Fox, and Burke strongly supported him, the signs of opposition were more considerable. The enormous amount of capital directly invested in the trade, or closely connected with it, told powerfully on Parliament. Much use was made of some regulating enactments which had lately been carried through the colonial Legislatures. Fears were expressed lest the sudden abolition of the trade would ruin the West Indian Isles, produce dangerous insurrectionary movements among the negroes, perhaps throw a great and lucrative branch of English commerce wholly into the hands of France. There was a demand for further inquiry, and the question was twice adjourned. In the country, however, the popular agitation on the subject showed little or no signs of abatement. A print of the plan and section of a slave ship, which was at this time very widely diffused, had a great influence on the popular imagination.[1] The rising Methodist and Evangelical party had taken up the question very warmly, and most of its prominent leaders were identified with the struggle.

The movement was at the same time strongly supported on the Continent, though by very different men. In France, Montesquieu, and Raynal, and also Necker, who was now at the head of French affairs, had written strongly on the iniquity of the trade, and the cause of abolition was vehemently advocated, on the grounds of the rights of men, by a large proportion of the rising revolutionary party. Lafayette, Mirabeau, Brissot, Clavière, and Condorcet had fully adopted it, and it was soon brought before the National Assembly. In France, however, as in England, there were fears that if one nation abolished the trade, its rival would rapidly monopolise it, and the growing

[1] See Clarkson, ii. 110–112.

distrust and alienation between the two countries was very unfavourable to the cause. Mirabeau told Clarkson that out of the twelve hundred members of the National Assembly, about three hundred would probably vote unconditionally for the suppression of the trade, but that about five hundred more would vote for it, if they had an unequivocal proof that it was the intention of England to abolish it.[1] At present all that could be promised was the suppression of the bounties by which the trade was encouraged.[2]

The fear of the French Revolution and its principles now exercised a great influence on English public opinion. The abolition of the slave trade, being supported by Jacobins, began to wear, in the eyes of many, a Jacobinical aspect, and the horrors of the negro insurrection at St. Domingo, followed by serious negro disturbances in the British colony of Dominica, greatly strengthened the reaction. It was noticed as an incontestable fact, that the opinion of the House of Commons in 1791 had turned decidedly against the abolitionists. In April Wilberforce moved for leave to bring in a Bill to prevent the further importation of slaves into the British West Indies, but after a long and interesting debate, and in spite of the support of Pitt, Fox, and Burke, the motion was defeated by 163 to 88. It was remarked, however, that nearly all the eminent men in the House of Commons were in the minority.[3]

It was about this time that the Sierra Leone colony obtained its charter of incorporation. This colony had been established a few years before, largely through the efforts of Granville Sharp. It was intended to be an asylum for freed negroes, and at the same time a great trading centre for the civilisation of Africa and the development of its resources; and it was especially specified in the charter of incorporation, that the company was on no account to deal in slaves or keep any persons in slavery. It became the refuge of many negroes who had obtained their freedom during the war of the American Revolution, and for some years it excited the sanguine hopes of philanthropists. These hopes were, however, not fulfilled.

[1] Clarkson, *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, ii. 163.

[2] Ibid. ii. 148.

[3] See an interesting letter of Romilly on this division. *Life of Romilly*, i. 425, 426. Clarkson, ii. 212–3

Mismanagement and various misfortunes retarded the development of the colony, and it suffered very seriously from French devastations during the great French war.

In 1792 the struggle passed through some new phases. The earnestness of the popular movement against the slave trade was shown by the multitude who, in all parts of England, agreed to leave off the use of sugar, as being a product of slave labour; by associations established in numerous provincial towns, corresponding with the central Abolition Society in London; by numerous public meetings to protest against the trade, and by the remarkable fact that in this year no less than 519 petitions were presented to Parliament for the abolition of the trade, while there were only four against the abolition, and one in favour of regulation.[1] On the other hand, both the opposition of interest and the opposition of panic had manifestly increased. The horrors of the St. Domingo revolt had sunk deeply in the minds of men. The King and Royal Family were extremely hostile. The public meetings and petitions, which seemed now becoming for the first time an important normal instrument in political struggles, were looked upon by leading politicians with much aversion, as tending to overthrow the independence of political judgment in Parliament and convert the representatives into mere delegates, and the dislike to such proceedings was much intensified by what was happening in France. Pitt himself appears for a time to have been shaken and dubious,[2] but when Wilberforce in April introduced a motion for immediate abolition, he cast off his hesitation and electrified the House by a speech which Fox, Windham, and Grey concurred in pronouncing to be one of the most extraordinary displays of eloquence they had ever heard. The debate had extended till past six in the morning, when in a superb peroration, which Wilberforce said seemed literally inspired, Pitt predicted how, the slave trade being abolished, the tardy justice of Europe would at last atone for the long agonies of Africa by bringing to that benighted continent the light of civilisation and knowledge; and as he spoke the rays of the rising sun streamed suddenly through the windows of the House, and the orator by a happy quotation at once applied the incident as an

[1] Clarkson, ii. 352–355.

[2] *Wilberforce's Life*, i. 341–344.

image and an omen of the future.[1] He concluded by declaring with great emphasis that he would oppose any proposition which tended to postpone even for an hour the abolition of the slave trade.

The House, however, thought otherwise. The policy of gradual abolition was now proposed by Dundas, and it was carried by 193 votes to 125. It was a policy which was also adopted in Denmark, where the King had lately issued an ordinance that after the year 1803 the trade should be no longer tolerated in any of his colonies. Such a policy was evidently acceptable to the majority in the House of Commons, and at last, after much dispute, they agreed on the year 1796 as that in which the trade should cease. When, however, the Bill was sent up to the Lords, a demand for more evidence was raised and carried, and the question was again adjourned.

Next year the French War broke out, and reforms of all kinds became unpopular. It was in vain that Wilberforce proposed a committee to consider the slave trade; a Bill for regulating and limiting the importation of negroes into our own colonies; a Bill for prohibiting the supply of slaves by British merchants to foreign colonies. In the country and in both Houses the cause was now associated with Jacobinism, and the association was strengthened when the French Convention in 1794 proclaimed the abolition of slavery in the French colonies, and when Danton openly declared that a great object of the measure was to produce a revolt among the negroes in the English and Spanish colonies. The conditions of the question were indeed profoundly altered, and Dundas urged the extreme danger of taking any step which might be offensive to colonial Legislatures at a time when the war was raging. Wilberforce, however, succeeded in 1794 in carrying his Bill for the abolition of the slave trade with foreigners, through the Commons; but in the Lords, Grenville, who had hitherto been one of his most faithful supporters, refused to defend it. The Duke of Clarence, Lord Abingdon, and Lord Thurlow led the opposition, and the Bill was easily defeated. In the two following years his motions were defeated in the Commons,

[1] 'Nos . . . primus equis Oriens afflavit anhelis,
Illic sera rubens accendit lumina Vesper.'
See Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, ii. 145, 146.

and in 1796 the interest on the subject was so languid that Dolben's annual Bill was dropped, for want of a sufficient attendance of members.

It was revived, however, in the following year, and though Wilberforce was again beaten on a motion asking leave to bring in a Bill to discontinue the trade within a limited time, measures were introduced, principally by his opponents, for regulating the conditions both of the slave trade and of slavery, with a view to depriving them of some of their worst characteristics. A parliamentary address was carried to the governors of the colonies, calling on them to take means to promote the welfare of the negroes, so that the trade should ultimately become unnecessary, and some measures in this direction were, shortly after, taken by the Legislatures of the Leeward Isles. An Act of George II. which authorised the sale of slaves at the suit of their master's creditors was repealed, and an Act was passed securing a greater height between the decks of slave ships. The strong feeling of the hour, however, was that the darkest period of a colossal war was no time for abolishing a lucrative trade, at the cost of irritating the colonial Legislatures and immediately after the acquisition of many new slave colonies. The majorities against Wilberforce were not large, but the abstentions were very numerous, and in 1798 and 1799 his motion was again defeated. Thornton at this time introduced a measure prohibiting the purchase of negroes on the northern coast of Africa, on the ground that it frustrated the good that was expected from the Sierra Leone Colony. It was postponed in 1798. In 1799 it passed the Commons, but was defeated in the Lords.

The century thus terminated with the temporary defeat of a cause which twelve years before seemed on the eve of triumph. I have noticed in a former chapter the sequel of the struggle,[1] and it is not necessary to recur to it. I will here only observe how different a complexion the eighteenth century would have presented to the historian if, in addition to the great Methodist and Evangelical revival of religion, it had been distinguished, as once appeared so probable, by the supreme philanthropic achievement of the abolition of the slave trade. While admit-

[1] Vol. v. pp. 65-68.

ting that the eighteenth century in England was not rich in conspicuous social and political reforms, it should not be forgotten how many great causes had been almost conquered in opinion in the early years of the Ministry of Pitt, and would in all human probability have been speedily carried into effect, if the fatal influence of the French Revolution and of the war which it produced had not checked, blighted, and distorted the natural progress. But for this influence, the closing years of the century would probably have seen the abolition of the English slave trade; a reform of Parliament; the removal of the Test and Corporation Acts from the Statute-book, and an immense reduction both of debt and of taxation. The great industrial transition which has been described might have been accomplished with comparatively little suffering, if it had not occurred when the French War had raised corn to a famine price and absorbed all the attention of the legislators; and it was the introduction from France of the revolutionary spirit into Ireland that for the first time made the Irish problem almost insoluble.

But in spite of the sudden and most disastrous blight which thus fell on so many promising causes, the eighteenth century deserves, I think, a more honourable place than has usually been assigned to it in the history of England. A century was certainly not without the elements of greatness, which witnessed the victories of Marlborough; the statesmanship of Chatham and his son; the political philosophy of Burke and Adam Smith; the religious movement of Wesley and Whitefield; the conquest of India; the discovery of Australia; the confirmation of the naval, and the establishment of the manufacturing, supremacy of England. In this century religious persecution practically ceased, and the form of the Constitution was thoroughly established. Whatever may be said against the English statesmen which it produced, it is at least certain that they carried England safely through the long period of a disputed succession; maintained free institutions when they were extinguished in almost every country in Europe; transformed Scotland from a scene of utter anarchy into a highly civilised country; kept the name of England for many successive generations very high among the nations of the world, and preserved

her in the closing years of the century from the most dangerous revolutionary epidemic of modern times. The period from the Restoration to the accession of the House of Hanover was a period of great selfishness and corruption in the higher spheres of Government, but from the accession of George II. the standard appears to have almost steadily risen. Factious, reckless, and corrupt statesmen often appeared conspicuously on the scene; but it is remarkable how very rarely such men have succeeded, for any considerable time, in acquiring a really controlling and dominant influence in English politics. No one, I think, who follows with care the confidential correspondence of English statesmen and diplomatists during the latter half of the century, can fail to be struck with the essential honesty with which English policy appears to have been conducted, and with the fidelity with which, in the broad lines of their policy, successive Governments represented and followed the opinion of the country.

The standard of duty, however, in the professions was undoubtedly lower than at present. The spirit of reform was less active. Many abuses, which would not now be tolerated for a day, were almost unquestioned. There was much more hardness and indifference to human suffering, and in the sphere of politics there were grave and scandalous evils. The King himself, during the administration of Lord North, was accustomed to devote many thousands of pounds to the purchase of borough seats.[1] Corruption at elections was constant and flagrant, and numerous sinecures and a lavish patronage were maintained and employed for political purposes.

Yet even in these respects the picture has been often overcharged. Some of the small borough seats were either purchased by public men who wished to secure their independence, or were disposed of in a manner that was very conducive to the interests of the country, and eminently honourable to their patrons. Some, at least, of the sinecures were usefully employed in rewarding merit, or served the purpose of retiring pensions to offices to which such pensions are now attached. If the public revenue was not administered quite as scrupu-

[1] Some decisive evidence of this has lately been published by Mr. Maxwell Lyte in his report on the MSS. of the Marquis of Abergavenny.

lously as at present, it is at least true that there was little absolute malversation, and the taxation was in general moderate and equitable, and singularly free from those unjust exemptions and privileges which were so general on the Continent.

The question, indeed, whether the standard of patriotism, of public duty, and of public honour has risen in England since the eighteenth century, is one which it appears to me far from easy to answer. It by no means follows that, because a nation has advanced in intelligence and even in morality, there must be necessarily a corresponding improvement in its governing and political class, for the improvement in the nation may be more than counterbalanced by the degradation of the suffrage. In one respect, the superiority of the English Parliaments of the eighteenth century will scarcely be disputed. With the doubtful exception of the small and short-lived Jacobite party, those Parliaments contained no party which was not in harmony with the general interests of the Empire, and did not sincerely desire its greatness and its prosperity. Corruption was very widely spread and very undisguised, but political corruption takes many forms, and each age has its characteristic vices. A democratic age, in which power is chiefly won by appeals to the great masses of the population, is likely to be an age of high moral profession, and it will be free from many of the prevalent evils of an aristocratic Government. The avowed cynicism; the disregard in foreign politics for the rights of nations; the open subordination of political interests to personal and family pretensions; the many forms of petty corruption which so often meet us in the eighteenth century, have wholly disappeared or greatly diminished; but another and a not less dangerous family of vices has much tendency to increase. Cant and hypocrisy; the combination of mean action and supersaintly profession; the habitual use of language that does not represent the real sentiments and motives of the speaker; the habit of disguising party and personal motives under lofty and high-sounding professions; the sacrifice of the most enduring interests of the nation, for the purpose of raising a popular cry or winning immediate applause; the systematic subordination of genuine conviction to popular favour—these are some of the characteristic vices of a democratic age.

In such an age the demagogue takes the place of the old sycophant. Bribery is applied not to individuals, but to classes. Dexterous appeals to ignorance, passion, and prejudice become supreme forms of party management. Questions of vast and dangerous import are unscrupulously raised for the purpose of uniting a party or displacing a Government; and a desire to trim the bark to every gust of popular favour produces apostasies, transformations, and alliances compared with which the coalition of Fox and North will appear very venial. No modern statesman would attempt to bribe individuals, or purchase boroughs like Walpole, or like North; but we have ourselves seen a minister going to the country on the promise that, if he was returned to office he would abolish the principal direct tax paid by the class which was then predominant in the constituencies. Irish politics have long since ceased to be conducted by ennobling borough owners and pensioning members of Parliament, but the very impulse and essence of their most powerful popular movement has been an undisguised appeal to the cupidity and the dishonesty of the chief body in the electorate. Lofty maxims and sacred names are invoked in Parliament much more frequently than of old; but he who will observe how questions of the most vital importance to the Constitution of England and the well-being of the Empire have in our generation been bandied to and fro in the party game; how cynically the principles of one year have sometimes been abandoned in the next; how recklessly prominent politicians have sought to gain their ends by setting the poor against the rich, and planting in the nation deadly seeds of class animosities and cupidities, may well learn to look with tolerance and with modesty upon the England of the past.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IRELAND, 1782–1789.

THE victory which had been achieved by the Irish popular party in 1782 was a great one, but many elements of disquietude were abroad. An agitation so violent, so prolonged, and so successful, could hardly be expected suddenly to subside, and it is a law of human nature, that a great transport of triumph and of gratitude must be followed by some measure of reaction. Disappointed ambitions, chimerical hopes, turbulent agitators thrust into an unhealthy prominence, the dangerous precedent of an armed body controlling or overawing the deliberations of Parliament, the appetite for political excitement to which Irishmen have always been so prone, and which ever grows by indulgence, the very novelty and strangeness of the situation, all contributed to impart a certain feverish restlessness to the public mind. Unfortunately, too, one of the foremost of Irish politicians was profoundly discontented. Flood, who had been the earliest, and, for a long period, by far the most conspicuous advocate of the independence of the Irish Parliament, found himself completely eclipsed by a younger rival. He had lost his seat in the Privy Council, his dignity of Vice-Treasurer, and his salary of 3,500*l.* a year, but he had not regained his parliamentary ascendency. All the more important constitutional questions were occupied by other, and usually by younger, men. He was disliked by the Government and distrusted by the Parliament. Even his eloquence had lost something of its old power, and by too frequent speaking in opposition to the sense of the House, he had often alienated or irritated his hearers.

Yelverton was made Attorney-General, and Burgh Prime Sergeant, but the Government had no wish to restore Flood to

his office, though they were willing to replace him in the Privy Council. Their intentions, however, in this respect were frustrated by a curious blunder. One of the most remarkable facts in this period of Irish history is the number of false steps which were due, not to any miscalculations of leading statesmen, but simply to the carelessness of subordinate officials. We have already seen that the insertion of Ireland in four or five very insignificant British Acts, at a most critical moment and in defiance of the warnings of the viceroy, had been one of the chief circumstances in creating the violent demand for independence, and that, in the opinion of Lord Carlisle, this insertion was due to pure inadvertence, official draughtsmen having probably copied the forms of previous Acts.[1] In 1782 the Government at last consented, after a long struggle, to accept the Bill making the judges removable only by the address of the two Houses of Parliament in Ireland, and to relinquish the disputed clause making the concurrence of the Irish Privy Council indispensable; but the Bill had scarcely been returned from England, when Shelburne wrote in much alarm to Portland that he had discovered that, 'by a mere mistake of the Council Office,' the very clause which was the subject-matter of dispute had been inserted, though 'it was not intended to have been adopted by the Committee of Privy Council,' and he begged the Lord Lieutenant to take such measures that no bad consequences should follow from the error.[2] In the dealings with Flood a much more serious mistake was made. The Lord Lieutenant thought it very desirable to enter into negotiation with him, and he wished to be authorised in the course of this negotiation, if he thought it expedient, to offer Flood a seat in the Privy Council; but a clerk by some strange mistake sent the nomination which was meant to be conditional, and at the option of the Lord Lieutenant, directly to the 'Gazette,' and it was from this source that Flood first learnt the intentions of the Ministers. He refused to accept the position, and the Lord Lieutenant spoke with very justifiable irritation of the great injury that was done to the public service by the premature disclosure.[3] Portland regarded Flood with much dislike. 'His ambition,' he said, 'is so immeasurable that

[1] See vol. iv. p. 540.
[2] May 3, 1782. Shelburne to Portland.
[3] June 8, 1782. Portland to Shelburne.

no dependence can be placed upon any engagement he may be induced to form.'[1]

The question of the sufficiency of the measures that had been taken for securing the constitutional independence of the Irish Parliament, had been raised in a discussion on the clause of the Address, which stated that 'there will no longer exist any constitutional question between the two nations that can disturb their mutual tranquillity.' Flood described this clause as superfluous and possibly dangerous, but he refused to divide against it, and the only two members who voted for its omission were Sir Samuel Bradstreet the Recorder of Dublin, and an able lawyer named Walshe, who first raised in Ireland the question of the adequacy of what was termed 'simple repeal.' The nature of this question may be stated in a few words. The Irish Parliament in 1782 had asserted its own independence of the British Legislature, and the British Parliament had responded by repealing the Declaratory Act of George I., which asserted the legislative and judicial power of Great Britain over Ireland. It was contended by the two lawyers I have mentioned, that as a matter of law this measure was insufficient to annul the assumed right of the British Parliament to legislate for Ireland. The Declaratory Act had not made the right, and therefore its repeal could not destroy it. Long before that Act had passed, the right of the English Parliament to legislate for Ireland had been asserted by Coke and other great authorities—had been frequently exercised and had been frequently acquiesced in. If it existed then, it existed still, and although as a matter of expediency the English Parliament had withdrawn its assertion, it was open to it at any time to renew it. No lawyer, it was said, would assert that the assumed right of Great Britain to legislate for Ireland could be taken away by implication. 'The repeal of a declaratory statute is not in construction of law a repeal or renunciation of the principle upon which that statute was founded.' It leaves the legal right exactly as it was before the Declaratory Act had passed. Nothing but an Act of the British Parliament expressly relinquishing or disclaiming the right to legislate for Ireland could be legally sufficient. Ireland must not rest content with 'a constructive freedom.' She must obtain

[1] August 9, 1782. Portland to Townsend.

such an explicit renunciation from Great Britain as would put an end to all further controversy and cavil, and become a perpetual charter of her freedom. The language of Fox in moving the repeal of the Act of George I. seemed to draw some distinction between external and internal legislation, and to foreshadow an attempt to retain some part of the former.

These arguments were at first treated in the Irish Parliament with much contempt, and were regarded merely as the quibbles of lawyers, and, although Flood soon after adopted them and brought them forward on several occasions, he found the great majority against him. Grattan, especially, contended that nothing could be more impolitic, nothing more ungrateful, nothing more dangerous, than to reopen a question which Parliament had solemnly pronounced to be closed. The dealings of nations, he said, must rest upon broad principles of equity and not upon mere legal special pleading, and it was plain that England in repealing the Declaratory Act had taken a step which was morally equivalent to a renunciation. She had in the first place formally asserted her right to legislate for Ireland. She had then, in consequence of an address of the Irish House of Commons denying that right, and with the avowed object of meeting the wishes of the Irish people, as formally retracted and expunged her assertion, and she had thus in effect disavowed or resigned the right. No reasonable man could doubt that this was the plain meaning of the transaction, nor could England revive her claim without the grossest perfidy. But if the supposition of perfidy were admitted, an Act of renunciation would be as useless as simple repeal. Nations cannot be bound like individuals by bonds or warrants. Parliament might renounce its own renunciation, and what one Parliament had enacted, another might repeal. Good faith alone could maintain the connection, and the good faith of England was already pledged to Irish independence. Ireland, it was said, might justly demand the withdrawal of a claim which was an act of usurpation, but with what consistency could she call upon England to renounce rights which she denied that England had ever possessed, or, while assuming to be an independent nation, seek the charter for her freedom in a foreign Statute-book? The Irish Parliament had stated its griev-

ances, had received redress, had acknowledged itself satisfied. A new demand could only be regarded as an unworthy attempt to humiliate England. Its only effect would be to shake the confidence of the people in their Constitution; to prolong a period of very dangerous agitation; to foster animosity and distrust between the two countries at a time when it was vitally important to Ireland and to the Empire that all such feelings should be speedily allayed.

These views predominated in the Irish Parliament, and they would no doubt have predominated in the country had not a series of very unfortunate incidents, originating in England, inflamed the jealousy of the nation. Lord Beauchamp, the son of Lord Hertford, strenuously maintained both in the British Parliament and in a pamphlet which was widely read, that simple repeal was entirely insufficient, unless it was accompanied by a formal renunciation.[1] Lord Abingdon—a not very conspicuous member of the English House of Lords—moved for leave to bring in a Bill declaring the right of the Parliament of Great Britain to regulate and control the whole external commerce and foreign trade of Ireland, and repealing any legislation that withdrew any portion of the commerce of Ireland from its control. The Bill was never, it is true, formally introduced, but its mere announcement was quite sufficient to excite consternation in Ireland.[2] Then came the news that two trade laws had passed in England which were drawn up—it is said through the inadvertence of clerks—in such a way as to include Ireland,[3] and about the same time Lord Mansfield decided an Irish law case, which had come up on appeal to the Court of King's Bench before the late Act had passed. All these things occurred within a few months of the establishment of the Constitution of Ireland, and at the very time when a great reaction of feeling was most to be apprehended. It was known that the Constitution of 1782 had been reluctantly conceded, that it had been conceded mainly in consequence of the desperate condition of public affairs, that it was detested by the Tory party on grounds of prerogative and by

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 30, 31. See, too, Lord Beauchamp's *Letter to the 1st Belfast Company of Volunteers.* Flood's *Life*, pp. 165–167. Townsend to Temple, Oct. 26, Nov. 4, 1782.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 147–152.

[3] Ibid. 335, 336.

a large section of the Whig party as putting an end to the system of commercial monopoly. Lord Rockingham, whose character was universally respected, had just died. The dispute for his succession had thrown English politics into great confusion and uncertainty, and brought other men to the helm, and Portland was now replaced by Lord Temple as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. It was widely believed that there was a disposition on the part of men in authority to undo in time of peace what had been granted in time of war, and a revulsion of feeling speedily set in. The judges, indeed, in Ireland, and several of the leading lawyers, asserted the sufficiency of what had been done, but the lawyers' corps of volunteers, which comprised a very large part of the legal profession, drew up a declaration that in their opinion no real security had been obtained, until the British Legislature had in express terms acknowledged its incapacity to legislate for Ireland. The popularity of Grattan suddenly sank, and that of Flood rose with a corresponding rapidity. It was said that the nation was deceived, that nothing had been really gained, that England was already showing a manifest disposition to withdraw what she had granted.

These suspicions were not unnatural, but they were certainly essentially unfounded. The conduct of Lord Mansfield, though much contested, was thought by the best lawyers to be in accordance with law, as the case which he decided had been entered in his court before the jurisdiction of that court was removed. Lord Beauchamp spoke solely in the interests of Ireland; Lord Abingdon had no connection with the Government, and the two English Bills in which Ireland was involved appear to have been only another instance of the gross carelessness of the official draughtsmen. It is, however, perfectly true that the English Ministers had from the first disliked the new Irish Constitution, and aimed at an ideal which was wholly different. To any statesman, indeed, who looked on the question with real prescience and without illusion, it must have been evident that the complete independence of the Irish Parliament as it was established in 1782, if it remained unqualified by any further arrangement, must weaken and might endanger the Empire. It was true, indeed, that at this time

the one essential condition of co-operation subsisted. There could be no reasonable doubt that the Irish Parliament, and the classes it represented, were unfeignedly and heartily loyal to the British connection. But was it quite certain that this state of things would always continue? Strange as it may now appear, the danger of a rebellious Catholic interest appears at this time to have been little felt. The general conservatism of Catholicism throughout the Continent; the total abstinence of the priesthood from Irish politics; the sincere and undoubted loyalty of the Catholic gentry; the passive attitude of the Catholic population during all the political troubles of the eighteenth century; the authority which the landlords exercised over their tenants; the complete concentration in Protestant hands of the elements of political power, and the enormous superiority of the Protestants in energy and intelligence, made danger from this quarter appear very remote. But among the Presbyterians of the North, and in the ranks of the volunteers, there were some disquieting signs of a republican and anti-English spirit, and if, by any change in its Constitution, these elements became ascendant, or even powerful, in the Irish Parliament, there was everything to be feared. A separate Irish Parliament consisting of men who were disloyal to the English Government could only lead either to complete separation or to civil war. It would be the most powerful and the most certain agent that the wit of man could devise for organising the resources of Ireland against England.

This contingency might appear a distant one, but even without any serious or reasoned disloyalty, there were in the Constitution of 1782 grave possibilities of conflict, and they were fully present to the minds of the English statesmen who originally consented to it. Fox declared, in the most emphatic language, that 'the intentions of those Ministers who had sent the repeal of the declaratory law [to Ireland] were thereby to make a complete, absolute, and perpetual surrender of the British legislative and judicial supremacy over Ireland,'[1] but he afterwards acknowledged that it was only with extreme reluctance, and in consequence of what he regarded as irresistible necessity, that he consented to the surrender of the right of

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 323.

external or commercial legislation, which left the Empire without one general superintending authority to embrace and comprehend the whole system of its navigation.[1] The surrender had been made, but he desired that the two nations should enter into a treaty arrangement, which would draw them more closely together, and one of the resolutions of the English Parliament, which has been already quoted, pointed to such a treaty.[2] 'As there can no longer exist any grounds of contest or jealousy on matters of right between the two countries,' wrote Rockingham to Portland, 'the only object of both will be how finally to arrange, settle, and adjust all matters whereby the union of power and strength and mutual and reciprocal advantage may be best permanently fixed.'[3]

Portland, however, was aiming at something more than this; and his secret correspondence shows that he was extremely anxious to regain for England a very large part of the legislative supremacy which had been surrendered. I have already referred to the letter in the beginning of May, in which he expressed his sanguine hope that the Irish Parliament would be prepared to enter into a treaty, either with Commissioners from the English Parliament, or through the medium of the Lord Lieutenant, 'to settle the precise limits of that independence which is required, the consideration that should be given for the protection expected, and the share it would be proper for them to contribute towards the general support of the Empire.' 'The regulation of their trade,' he added, 'is a subject which, I think, would very properly make a part of the treaty,' and he concluded that without such an adjustment the country would not be worth possessing, and that it might even be advisable to abandon it altogether.[4] It soon, however, appeared evident that the Irish leaders, though they were quite ready to vote additional sailors and soldiers for Imperial purposes, were not prepared at this time to enter into any treaty which would restrict their future liberty of action. In June, Fitzpatrick, the Chief Secretary, was authorised, in the Irish Parliament, publicly to disavow any intention of bringing for-

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxv. 966. This statement was made in 1785.

[2] See vol. iv. pp. 550–553.

[3] May 25, 1782. Grattan's *Life*, ii. 289.

[4] May 6, 1782. Portland to Shelburne. (Printed in Grattan's *Life*, ii. 286–288.)

ward further measures grounded on the second resolution of the British Parliament.[1] But within three days of this disavowal, certain hopes which had been held out by an obscure Irish member named Ogilvie, had drawn Portland into a new negotiation. Without the knowledge of his Chief Secretary, and with the most urgent injunctions of secrecy, he wrote to Shelburne, expressing his hope that the Irish Parliament might be induced to pass an Act 'by which the superintending power and supremacy of Great Britain in all matters of State, and general commerce, will be virtually and effectually acknowledged, that a share of the expense in carrying on a defensive or offensive war, either in support of our dominions or those of our allies, shall be borne by Ireland in proportion to the actual state of her abilities, and that she will adopt every such regulation as may be judged necessary by Great Britain for the better ordering and securing her trade and commerce with foreign nations, or her own colonies or dependencies.'[2] Shelburne received the intimation with delight. 'Let the two kingdoms,' he wrote, 'be one; which can only be by Ireland now acknowledging the superintending power and supremacy to be where Nature has placed it, in precise and unambiguous terms.'[3] In a few days, Portland wrote with great mortification, that he had discovered that it was at this time perfectly hopeless attempting to induce Parliament to adopt any such scheme, but it is probable that the rumour of his negotiations spread abroad, and contributed something under the new viceroyalty to the prevailing uneasiness.

Lord Temple had arrived in Dublin on September 15, and his first impression was, that the task he had undertaken was almost desperate. In some very confidential letters to Shelburne, he depicted the state of the country in the blackest colours. 'No Government,' he says, 'exists.' 'Those to whom the people look up with confidence are not the Parliament, but a body of armed men composed chiefly of the middling and

[1] See his letter to Grattan, Grattan's *Life*, ii. 297.

[2] Portland to Shelburne, June 6, 1782. Grattan's *Life*, ii. 291, 292. This correspondence was first disclosed by Pitt, in the Union Debate in 1799. Portland expressed his firm persuasion that Grattan would support the Bill, but he had evidently no communication with Grattan on the subject.

[3] Shelburne to Portland, June 9, 1782.

lower orders, influenced by no one, but leading those who affect to guide them.' 'There is hardly a magistrate who will enforce, or a man who will obey any law to which he objects.' Every day, he said, confirmed his opinion of the necessity of maintaining the strongest opposition to Flood, and to the majority of the volunteers. For this purpose he had made immediate overtures to Charlemont, but he wrote to Shelburne 'in the strictest confidence,' and with a desire that it should be communicated to no one but the King, that he had no real wish to add weight to Lord Charlemont's party. His object was to prevent that party from flying off in support of Mr. Flood's doctrines which were daily growing more popular, and also 'to foment that spirit of disunion among the volunteers, upon which alone,' he said, 'I found my hopes of forming a Government.' The middle and lower classes of volunteers were fast ranging themselves under the banner of Flood, but Flood was universally disliked by the nobility and persons of property, and he must be resisted or possibly bought. 'It is my unalterable opinion,' wrote the Lord Lieutenant, 'that the concession is but the beginning of a scene which will close for ever the account between the two kingdoms.' 'Much time is necessary to recover to the Crown that energy which alone can check a ferment that confines itself to no settled objects, but pervades every part of Ireland.' The one chance of securing the authority of the Government, lay in the Irish Parliament. 'The country is too wild to act from reflection, and till you can oppose Parliament effectually to the volunteers, nothing can be done.' Grattan was decided to stand his ground, and confident of success if the Government would support him. 'Nothing but a Parliament,' repeated Temple, 'can recover the Government, and be opposed to the volunteers,' and he urged the Government to hasten the elections and summon speedily a new Parliament.[1]

The picture must be judged with some allowance for the colouring of a mind which was always peculiarly prone to exaggerate difficulty and opposition. In one respect Temple

[1] Temple to Shelburne, Sept. 30, Oct 9, 28, Dec. 2, 6, 1782. These letters are not in the regular Government correspondence in the Record Office. I know them through the abstracts in the Lansdowne Papers. British Museum, Add. MSS. 24,131.

speedily changed his policy. 'No terms of reprobation,' he wrote in October, could be too strong to apply to the 'execrable and iniquitous publication of Lord Beauchamp,' but when in the following month the decision of Lord Mansfield was announced, it appeared to him that both in policy and honour a new course was required.[1]

'The claim,' he then wrote, 'so solemnly made, was as solemnly yielded by England, and the repeal of the 6 George I. was understood by England and accepted by the Parliament of Ireland in their addresses to his Majesty, as a full and final renunciation of all claims of jurisdiction and of legislation internal and external. And to this compact the Duke of Portland was enabled to pledge his personal faith, and as far as my testimony could add to it, I conceived myself, on my arrival here, authorised to pledge the faith of the King's servants of England, and my own, that these concessions should be maintained inviolate. It is now certain, that notwithstanding this compact . . . Lord Mansfield has conceived himself authorised to entertain and decide a cause which had been removed into his court prior to the passing of the Act.' Such a measure might be legal, but it was a distinct breach of the compact by which the right to bind and to judge Ireland only by her own laws and by her own courts was clearly yielded.[2]

There were those in Ireland who maintained with Flood that an Act of renunciation was imperatively necessary to the security of the Constitution. There were those who, with Grattan, considered that such an Act was wrong in principle, and should not be conceded, and there were those who with Charlemont and Chief Baron Burgh considered that, though legally and constitutionally superfluous, it had become politically necessary, as the only means of allaying discontent. To this opinion Temple had now come. It would have been better in his opinion, 'in the interest of the whole Empire, that external legislation (that is, the right of directing the commerce of Ireland) had been reserved by England.' But it had not been reserved, and it remained only to fulfil religiously, the terms of the compact. He had been authorised to pledge the faith of

[1] Temple to Shelburne, Oct. 28, Dec. 2 and 6, 1782.
[2] (Most secret and confidential) Temple to Townshend, Nov. 30, 1782.

Government, and his own, 'that no attempt should be made to tread back one iota of concessions already made, or to break the good faith so solemnly pledged;' and when 'the question of the sufficiency of simple repeal was agitated from one end of the island to the other,' he had declared in the strongest terms, and with the full approbation of the Government in England, that 'simple repeal comprised complete renunciation.' But the judgment of Lord Mansfield had baffled his policy. 'I owe it to the King's service,' he said, 'to be understood clearly that there is not a man in Ireland (even of those who most firmly supported Lord Carlisle), who will maintain opinions favourable to this measure or even palliating it, and that the only reason for the appearance of a calm is that all Ireland is persuaded that England will explain this breach of compact. . . . If the rights specifically acknowledged by England should now be controverted (and I must contend from the clear and unequivocal words of the Irish address, that the right to bind and to judge Ireland only by her own laws and by her own courts was clearly yielded), I cannot hesitate to say that the public faith of the nation, and the private honour of individuals, are committed. Conceiving that this cannot be the intention of the Cabinet, I am only alarmed at the delay.' Two Irish causes are now before the English House of Lords. If it should decide them, 'I will not answer for the effect of such a judgment twenty-four hours after it is known.' Ministers should consider 'the danger to which the public tranquillity of Ireland is exposed, for want of a clear and satisfactory avowal of those principles upon which the Parliament of England proceeded in the month of June last, when they admitted the Irish addresses as the basis of their proceedings.' 'This crisis,' he added, 'will be decisive upon the practicability of governing Ireland by English connection and influence, for, as to an attempt by force (even if a foreign peace would permit it), I trust that the consideration is too wild to have occurred to any man.'[1]

The Government and Parliament of England acted frankly upon this advice, and, for the second time, they consented fully to meet the wishes of the Irish people. In the beginning of 1783, a renunciation Bill was carried without difficulty through the

[1] (Most secret) Temple to Townshend, Dec. 12, 14, 1782.

British Parliament,[1] which completely set at rest every reasonable or plausible demand of the party of Flood. It declared that the 'right claimed by the people of Ireland, to be bound only by laws enacted by his Majesty and the Parliament of that kingdom in all cases whatever, and to have all actions, and suits at law or in equity, which may be instituted in the kingdom, decided by his Majesty's courts, therein finally, and without appeal from thence, shall be, and it is hereby declared to be established, and ascertained for ever, and shall at no time hereafter be questioned or questionable,' and that no writ of error or appeal from Ireland shall under any circumstances be again decided in England. No surrender or disclaimer could be more explicit or more honourable, and it must be remembered that it was not made by England at a time of great national danger, but at the very moment when the re-establishment of peace had restored her power. When Temple communicated the news to the King's servants in Ireland, the impression it made was very deep. 'I found in everyone,' he wrote, 'the strongest impressions of the national good faith with which Great Britain has acted, at a moment when her external situation might possibly have given another turn to her councils.'[2]

The Renunciation Act forms the coping-stone of the Constitution of 1782, and before we proceed with our narrative it may be advisable to pause for a moment in order to form a clear conception of the nature of that Constitution—its merits, its defects, and its dangers. Much had indeed been gained—the independence of the judges, the control of the army, the appellate jurisdiction of the Irish House of Lords, the extinction of the power of the Privy Council to originate, suppress, or alter Irish legislation, the renunciation of the power of the British Parliament to legislate for Ireland, the full and repeated acknowledgment of the doctrine that the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland had alone the right to make her laws. An Irish Act of Henry VIII. and the Irish Act of recognition of William and Mary, had established that the crowns of England and Ireland were inseparable, so that whoever was King of England was *ipso facto* King of Ireland; but the two Legis-

[1] 23 George III. c. 28.
[2] Temple to Townshend, Feb. 12, 1783.

latures were now regarded as independent, co-ordinate, and in their respective spheres co-equal.

It is sufficiently plain, however, that this was not, and could not be, the case. English Ministers were necessarily dependent on the support of the British Parliament and of that Parliament alone, and even apart from corrupt agencies, English Ministers exercised an enormous influence on Irish legislation. The King's veto was obsolete in England, but it was not likely to be obsolete in Ireland, and it could only be exercised on the advice of his Ministers in England. The British Parliament claimed and enjoyed a right of watching over and controlling the conduct of the Executive Government, even in the exercise of what are justly considered undoubted prerogatives of the Crown, and this right, or at least this power, was wholly, or almost wholly, wanting in Ireland. Even the English Privy Council, though it had lost all recognised and formal control over Irish legislation, still retained a not inconsiderable influence. When Bills were sent over from Ireland to receive the royal sanction, it was the custom to submit them in the first place to a committee of the Privy Council, who were instructed to examine them and report on them to the King's law officers in England. This wheel of the machine of administration, indeed, was not public, and it appears to have escaped the notice of historians, but there is reason to believe that it was not inoperative. Occasionally mistakes were detected by the Committee of the Privy Council in Bills which came over from Ireland, and the Secretary of State then directed the Lord Lieutenant to introduce into the Irish Parliament supplemental Bills for the purpose of correcting them, and sometimes, where this was not possible, Irish Bills were not returned.[1]

Much more important was the fact that there was, properly speaking, no ministry in Ireland responsible to the Irish Parliament. The position of Irish Ministers was essentially different from the position of their colleagues in England. Ministerial power was mainly in the hands of the Lord Lieu-

[1] Several examples of this kind, taken from the books of the Privy Council, will be found in a valuable article in the *Edinburgh Review*, April 1886, pp. 579, 580. The mistakes appear to have principally occurred in regulating the commercial intercourse, on the basis of reciprocity. The duties or bounties were sometimes incorrectly calculated.

tenant and of his Chief Secretary, and this latter functionary led the House of Commons, introduced for the most part Government business, and filled in Ireland a position at least as important as that of a Prime Minister in England. But the Lord Lieutenant and the Chief Secretary were not politicians who had risen to prominence and leadership in the Irish Parliament. They were Englishmen, strangers to Ireland, appointed and instructed by English Ministers, and changed with each succeeding Administration. The Irish Government was thus completely subordinated to the play of party government in England. An Irish administration which commanded the full confidence of the Irish Parliament might at any moment be overthrown by a vote in the English Parliament on some purely English question.

This appears to me to have been a fatal fault in the Constitution of 1782. It explains why the duty of 'supporting English Government,' as distinguished from party allegiance, was represented by very honest politicians, as a maxim essential to the safe working of the Irish Constitution. The form of Government was wholly different from that which now exists in the free colonies of England. In those colonies the English governor holds an essentially neutral position. He is appointed for a term of years irrespective of party changes, and although on a very few points affecting the Empire at large, he receives instructions from England, he is not the real source or originator of colonial legislation. The local Parliament divides itself into two great sections representing colonial opinions. Colonial parties are entirely distinct from English ones. The leaders of the dominant section become naturally the Ministers; and when one side of the House is discredited, power is at once and without difficulty transferred to the other. If the local Parliament desired to sever the connection with the mother country, it would be a most formidable instrument in doing so; but as long as it has no such wish, it is found by experience that under this system, great convulsions of opinion and changes of power may take place, either in England or the colonies, without in the smallest degree straining the connection, or affecting the position of the representative of the Crown. Colonial and English policy move on different planes,

and except on very rare occasions there can be no friction or collision. But such a form of government as existed in Ireland must necessarily have led to the gravest contest, if the Irish Parliament became a really representative body, fluctuating with the fluctuations of Irish opinion, and at the same time moving on English party lines. It would be absurd to suppose that the balance of parties in the two Legislatures could be always the same, and would always vibrate in harmony, and it was not only possible, but in the highest degree probable, that the time would come when the full tide of party feeling would be running in one direction in England, and in the opposite in Ireland. Could a Constitution then subsist under which an English Cabinet appointed and directed the administration of Ireland?

Under any circumstances the difficulty of keeping the Irish Parliament free from the contagion of English party spirit must have been considerable. Ireland was too near England, and too variously and closely connected with her, not to feel her dominant impulses. Some seats in the Irish House of Commons were at the disposal of great English noblemen who were conspicuous in English politics. Flood, Conolly, and several of the Chief Secretaries held seats at the same time in the Parliaments both of England and Ireland, and close ties of friendship, relationship, and common education connected many of the leading personages in the two countries. Every cause that acted powerfully on English opinion was followed eagerly in Ireland, and some of the questions that were most vitally important to Ireland were party questions in England. Irish viceroys continually represented to the English Government the danger of introducing in England measures for parliamentary reform, or for the relief of the Catholics, on account of the influence they were certain to have in Ireland. But that part of the Constitution which made the Executive in Ireland mainly dependent on English party changes, made it impossible to keep Ireland permanently external to English party divisions, and in a reformed Parliament it could not, as it seems to me, have long continued.

I have already quoted the Duke of Portland's lament, in 1782, that he found the Whigs were not looked on in Ireland as

in any way superior to the Tories; and that the general maxim of supporting the King's Government had taken the place of party allegiance.[1] In 1784, the Duke of Rutland, who had just become Lord Lieutenant, in a confidential letter to Lord Sydney adopted the opposite view, and dwelt on it with great emphasis. He mentioned that the addresses to him on assuming the government of Ireland were carried through both Houses with the single dissent of the Duke of Leinster, who had privately informed him that he must oppose the Administration. This, Rutland said, showed an evident intention to make the present state of English politics a ground for opposition in Ireland, and he adds that, in agreement with most of the leading people in Ireland, he was very anxious 'to separate and keep away every mixture of English politics and party division from the conduct of affairs.' It would be, he said, 'a most serious misfortune to Ireland, and a great risk to her tranquillity and good order, if she had any implication in the consequences of those divisions and animosities which unhappily prevail in Great Britain.' It is impossible to draw off the attention of many considerable persons in Ireland from English politics. They do 'very materially influence their conduct as to the degree of support and assistance they will engage to give.' Security must be given, 'on very high terms indeed, that particular persons shall be benefited, without being liable to disappointment in case of new changes in administration. I have not a doubt but that the principle of supporting English government prevails over any other, where no bias of interest is thrown on either side, and the good disposition towards his Majesty's service is very generally, and I believe sincerely, professed.'[2]

It must be added that the English doctrine that a parliamentary censure carried against a ministry, or the defeat of an important ministerial measure, must be followed by a resignation, was not recognised in Ireland. Of this fact we shall have more than one illustration in the following pages. The inferiority, however, of the Irish House of Commons in this respect, appears to me to have been a good deal exaggerated; for it is, I think, plain that a parliament, in which the ministers were in a perma-

[1] See vol. iv. pp. 548, 549.
[2] Rutland to Sydney (confidential), Feb. 27, 1784.

nent minority, possessed ample power of driving them from office. If an English ministry, which has lost the confidence or incurred the condemnation of the House of Commons, now retires from office, this is not because there is any law compelling it to do so, but simply because the House of Commons exercises such a commanding power in the State that it would be impossible to govern without its concurrence. The Irish Parliament also, under the Constitution of 1782, possessed a great reserve of coercive power. Without the annual Mutiny Act the army could not be supported. Without the additional duties which were voted, at first biennially and afterwards annually, the public service could not be carried on. The magnitude of the hereditary revenue, and the absence of an appropriation Act, placed a much larger proportion of the revenues in Ireland out of the control of the Parliament than in England, and gave great facilities for corruption; but the hereditary revenue consisted mainly of duties voted in perpetuity, which could never be efficiently collected without the assistance of Parliament.[1]

These remarks will, I think, be sufficient to show how impossible it would have been to preserve the Constitution of 1782 unchanged, if the Irish Parliament was so constituted that the balance of political power fluctuated as frequently and decisively as in England. There were also certain other points on which there was much need of supplemental legislation, and which presented grave possibilities of difficulty and danger. If the Irish endeavoured to foster their industries by protective or prohibitory duties on English goods, they would be acting in perfect accordance with the economical notions prevailing in every leading country in Europe, and especially with the precedents of English policy. There was no treaty arrangement between the two countries which prevented such a course, but it was a course which might prove both economically and politically dangerous to England. Economically, it would close against English trade a market which, in the eighteenth century, had a great importance, and which commercial jealousy considerably overrated. Politically, it might loosen the connection between the two countries, produce feelings of alienation,

[1] See on this subject a forcible statement in Grattan's *Speeches*, i. 244, 245.

if not of positive hostility, and greatly strengthen the connection between Ireland and France. It was quite possible that some foreign country might become more closely connected with Ireland than England. At the same time there was no provision whatever for the formation of an Irish navy, or for any participation of Ireland in the expense of the British Navy, which protected Irish commerce. It was noticed in 1783 that the whole navy of Ireland consisted of but six revenue cruisers.[1]

In foreign policy the position of Ireland was necessarily completely subordinate. The whole subject of peace and war, alliances and confederacies, lay beyond her domain. Whenever the King of England made peace or war, Ireland was involved in his act. A declaration of war in London at once exposed her coast to invasion. A treaty of peace at once rendered it secure and bound Ireland by its terms. It was no doubt technically true that peace or war lay within the prerogative of the Crown, but the Sovereign in these as in all other matters could only act by the advice of his English Ministers, and could only select as ministers those statesmen who were supported by a majority in the British Parliament and who were prepared to carry its policy into effect. It was probable that the declaration of war would be the issue of a long train of foreign policy, repeatedly discussed and modified by the British Parliament, but the Irish Parliament would have no voice in directing its course. It was probable that the war would arise from some question with which Ireland was totally unconcerned, perhaps some commercial question relating to parts of the world from which Irish commerce was excluded. Situated indeed as Ireland was, it was scarcely possible that she should have any enemies except those who were made so by British policy, yet she was perpetually liable to be involved in British wars.

She had, however, one power which might be very efficient, but also very dangerous, to the Empire. The actual participation of Ireland in the common cause could only be effected and sustained by the independent action of the Irish Parliament. If that Parliament, disapproving of the policy which led to the war, desiring to make its power felt in the only possible way in

[1] *Irish Parliamentary Debates*, ii. 75.

foreign politics, disliking the Ministry which made the war, or convinced that Ireland had no interest in its issue, thought fit to withhold its assistance, the Empire might in the most critical periods be deprived of a great portion of its strength, and Ireland by a tacit arrangement with the enemy might be at peace while England was at war. From a military point of view the importance of Ireland to England was very great. Her geographical position and her excellent harbours would make her invaluable to an enemy. In times of peace she maintained an army of 15,000 men, while Great Britain usually maintained only 17,000 or 18,000, and in every war she had contributed largely to the armies in the field.[1] But under the Constitution of 1782 this assistance was purely optional, depending on the precarious and transient humours of a popular assembly. If the Irish Parliament at any time thought fit to reduce its army as excessive, it had full power to do so, and in time of war the danger that might result from the conflicting action of two independent Parliaments could hardly be overrated. In the great revolutionary war which filled the last years of the century, the English Parliament exhibited the spectacle of a minority which was fiercely opposed to the war and which did everything in its power to embarrass the Ministry that conducted it. Such a minority had a considerable and very injurious moral influence on the struggle, but being a minority it was not able to carry its designs into effect. But if the majority in the Irish Parliament had shared the sentiments of the minority in England, we should probably have seen Ireland neutralising her ports, withdrawing her troops, forbidding recruiting, passing votes of censure on the war, and addressing the King in favour of peace.

[1] I have already abundantly illustrated this fact; but the following passage, from a speech of Burke in 1785, may not be without interest to the reader. 'He was sorry to say that she [Ireland] at present, in time of profound peace, was running in debt, her expenses greatly exceeding her income; but he remembered that in 1753 she had been able to pay off a considerable debt, and had besides a surplus of 260,000*l.* in her treasury. But what was truly astonishing, and he had been a witness of it himself, so soon after as 1761 she was enabled by her prudent system of economy to keep an army of 24,000 in pay, of which 8,000 were sent by her to fight the battles of Great Britain abroad, whilst 16,000 remained in the kingdom for home defence. She also sent 33,000 recruits, her own natives at her own expense, to fill up regiments in the British service, and spent above 600,000*l.* in Germany for the support of the war. This was an effort from which England had reaped the greatest advantage.' *Parl. Hist.* xxv. 651.

Could it be questioned that under such circumstances the very existence of the Empire might have been endangered?

I hasten to add that these things never occurred. Nothing is more conspicuous in the history of the Irish Parliament than the discretion with which it abstained from all discussions on foreign policy, and the loyalty and zeal with which it invariably supported England in time of war. Pitt, in introducing the Union in 1799,[1] dwelt strongly on the dangers I have described, and represented them as leading motives of his policy; but he at the same time acknowledged that the divergences in time of war between the two Parliaments which he so gravely feared, had in fact never occurred, and Foster in that great speech, which is perhaps the best argument against the Union, observed that 'in points of peace and war the Irish Parliament had never even during centuries differed in opinion from the British, though its power to do so had been as free and unlimited before as since the Constitution of 1782.' On no point was the policy of Grattan more strongly marked and more consistent than in the earnestness with which he urged that in all questions of peace and war, Ireland must unreservedly follow in the wake of England. But it is the part of a prescient statesman to look forward to distant dangers and to changed dispositions. If the overwhelming power of British Government on the Irish Parliament were withdrawn; if in time of war party passions raged, and factious talent was in the ascendant; if the Parliament of Ireland ceased to be drawn exclusively from classes that were thoroughly loyal to the connection, there were grave dangers to be feared. There is reason to believe that such dangers were already vividly present to the minds of English Ministers; and as early as 1783, the Duke of Richmond had declared in Parliament, that they could only be adequately met by 'an incorporate Union.'[2]

The effect of the simple repeal controversy on Irish politics, was very pernicious. It prolonged for several months the period of agitation. It divided the national party in Ireland, and transferred the popular ascendency from Grattan to a man of much more doubtful purity of motive. It, above all, profoundly discredited the Irish Parliament. The English Act of Renun-

[1] January 23, 1799.

[2] Plowden, *Historical Review of the State of Ireland*, ii. 17.

ciation was accepted as a proof that the reasoning of Flood was correct, that nothing had before been secured, that the Irish Parliament, in maintaining the adequacy of simple repeal, was betraying the liberties of the country, and that those liberties had once more been saved by the volunteers. To the pressure exerted by that body, it was said, Ireland ultimately owed her free trade, the concessions of 1782, and the final charter of 1783, and had Parliament been her sole representative, no one of these things would have been obtained. Irish freedom was now established as far as words could settle it, but could it be safely entrusted to the guardianship of an assembly, in which twenty or thirty great borough-owners could always control a majority? Might not such a parliament, it was asked, be induced to sell to an English minister its independence, or even its separate existence? Flood strenuously maintained that one more great battle must be fought before the Irish Constitution could be secure. The volunteers must induce or coerce Parliament to pass such a reform bill as would make it a true representative of the Protestant section of the nation.

The question was not altogether a new one, nor was it exclusively of home growth. In England, as we have seen, parliamentary reform had acquired a foremost place among political topics, and there was scarcely any other which stirred so strongly the popular sentiment. Chatham had strenuously advocated it, and he had predicted that, 'before the end of the century, either the Parliament will reform itself from within, or be reformed with a vengeance from without.' The question was brought before the English Parliament with great elaboration by Wilkes in 1776, by the Duke of Richmond in 1780, by the younger Pitt in 1782 and in 1783. Propositions for disfranchising the rotten boroughs, for enfranchising the great manufacturing towns, for adding to the electors and to the members of the counties, for annual parliaments, for universal suffrage, and for equal electoral districts, had been eagerly discussed both in Parliament and beyond its walls. Powerful democratic societies had been formed in the great cities, and they were already in close correspondence with the Irish volunteers, and extremely anxious to induce them to make the attainment of parliamentary reform a capital object of their policy. It was

obvious that a victory in one country would accelerate a victory in the other, and the arguments in favour of reform were much stronger in Ireland than in England. Among the English reformers who corresponded with the Irish volunteers were the Duke of Richmond, Price, Cartwright, and Lord Effingham. In June 1782 Portland, when forwarding to the Government an address from the volunteer delegates of Ulster, thanking the English Parliament for the concessions that had been made, mentions the appearance in their resolutions of 'some new matter respecting the state of the representation in this country, which . . . has been endeavoured of late to be brought into discussion by a very active emissary, who has come from England expressly for that purpose;'[1] but it was not until the simple repeal question was raised that the subject of reform acquired real importance. In March 1783 a provincial meeting of volunteers at Cork passed resolutions in favour of parliamentary reform, and on July 1 following, delegates of forty-five companies of Ulster volunteers assembled at Lisburne, resolved to convoke for the ensuing September a great meeting of volunteers at Dungannon, to consider the best way of obtaining a more equal representation in Parliament.

In truth, even putting aside the great anomaly that the Roman Catholics were wholly unrepresented, it was a mockery to describe the Irish House of Commons as mainly a representative body. Of its 300 members, 64 only represented counties, while 100 small boroughs, containing ostensibly only an infinitesimal number of electors, and in reality in the great majority of cases at the absolute disposal of single patrons, returned no less than 200. Borough seats were commonly sold for 2,000*l.* a parliament, and the permanent patronage of a borough for from 8,000*l.* to 10,000*l.* The Lower House was to a great extent a creation of the Upper one. It was at this time computed that 124 members of the House of Commons were absolutely nominated by 53 peers, while 91 others were chosen by 52 commoners.[2]

[1] Portland to Shelburne, June 25, 1782.

[2] Gordon's *Hist. of Ireland*, ii. 286. *Letter to Henry Flood on the Representation of Ireland* (Belfast, 1783). See, too, a full report, by the committee appointed by the delegates at Lisburne to collect evidence about parliamentary reform. *Proceedings relating to the Ulster Assembly of Volunteer Delegates* (Belfast, 1783); and also the detailed analysis of the Irish representation in Grattan's *Life*, iii. 472–487.

It needs no comment to show the absurdity and the danger of such a condition of representation. In Ireland, it is true, as in England, borough influence was not always badly used, and the sale of seats, and the system of nomination, neither of which carried with them any real reproach, introduced into Parliament many honourable, able and independent men, who were thoroughly acquainted with the condition of the country. But the state of the Irish representation was much worse than that of the English, and incomparably more dangerous to the Constitution of the country. England was at least her own mistress. The strongest minister only kept his power by a careful attention to the gusts of popular feeling, and no external power desired to tamper with her Constitution. But the relation of Ireland to England was such that it was quite conceivable that an Irish parliament might act in violent opposition to the wishes of the community which it represented, and quite possible that an English minister might wish it to do so. As long as the volunteers continued, public opinion possessed such a formidable and organised power that it could act forcibly on Parliament. But once that organisation was dissolved, the reign of a corrupt oligarchy must revive. However independent the Irish Parliament might be in the eyes of the law and in the theory of the Constitution, it could not fail to be a dependent and subordinate body holding a precarious existence, as long as a full third of its members were placemen or pensioners, and as long as the English Minister could control the election of the majority of its members. Some borough seats were at the disposal of bishops appointed by Government. Some were in the hands of great English noblemen. It was only necessary to secure a small number of great native borough-owners, to obtain a compact majority independent of all fluctuations of popular feeling. The lavish distribution of peerages had proved the cheapest and most efficacious means of governing Parliament, and a pamphleteer in 1783 reminded his countrymen that since 1762 inclusive, the Irish peerage had been enriched or degraded by the addition of thirty-three barons, sixteen viscounts, and twenty-four earls.[1]

During the short Administration of Lord Temple, which lasted only from September 1782 till the following spring, and

[1] Seward's *Rights of the People Asserted* (Dublin, 1783), p. 34.

corresponded with the Shelburne Ministry in England, the Reform agitation scarcely appeared. This Lord Lieutenant was son of George Grenville, and with a double share of the unhappy temper, he inherited much of the industry and something of the financial ability of his father. He succeeded in detecting and punishing several instances of great peculation in administration, and he announced to Lord Charlemont his firm intention of reducing 'that impolitic and unconstitutional influence which has been the bane and ruin of both countries.' During his government the order of the Knights of Saint Patrick was created, and Charlemont was one of its first members, and a scheme was adopted for establishing in Ireland a colony of refugees from Geneva, who desired to expatriate themselves on account of the aristocratic revolution which had just taken place in that city. It was hoped that they might introduce into Ireland some valuable industries and their excellent system of education, and a sum of 50,000*l.* was assigned for establishing the settlement at a place near the confluence of the Barrow and the Suir. A few refugees came over, but the plan ultimately failed on a dispute about terms. It is remarkable as showing how little the Irish Government dreaded the introduction into the country of extreme forms of continental democracy, and if it had succeeded it is probable that it would have brought to Ireland some men who bore a conspicuous part in the French Revolution.[1]

On the resignation of Shelburne, and the triumph of the coalition of Fox and North, Temple at once resigned his post, and Lord Northington was appointed to succeed him. English politics were, however, for some weeks in a state of extreme uncertainty and confusion, and although the resignation of Temple was sent in on March 12, it was not until June 5 that he was allowed to leave Ireland. He complained bitterly of the delay as a personal injury, and added that it was exercising a most dangerous influence in Ireland. 'The very uncertain state of Government in England,' he wrote, 'has operated very strongly upon Irish Government, by unsettling the confidence and opinions which I have so eagerly laboured to impress.' 'The Government of this kingdom suffers by this interregnum to an

[1] Plowden, ii. 23–27.

extent which I cannot describe, and which will materially affect its political situation.'[1]

A dissolution, which immediately followed the arrival of Northington, contributed to maintain the political excitement. It was a significant indication of the relations between the King and his new Ministers, that some of the bishops refused to take the ordinary course of placing their borough patronage at the disposal of the Government;[2] and among the lower classes a very bad harvest, followed by great commercial depression, prepared the way for political disaffection. The last letters of Lord Temple and the early letters of Lord Northington were full of complaints of the intensity of the distress. In November 1782, the Irish Parliament had laid an embargo on the export of corn, flour, and potatoes, and about six months later the Lord Lieutenant complained that in all parts of the kingdom the prices were so high that the industrious poor could barely support their families by their labours. In the North, oatmeal, on which the poor chiefly depended for their food, in a short time trebled in price. A proclamation was issued authorising the Custom-house officers to accept bonds for the high duties imposed by law on foreign corn imported into Ireland, on the understanding that Parliament as soon as it met would pass an Act to cancel these bonds; a bounty was offered for the importation of wheat, oats, and barley, and in several parts of Ireland tumultuous risings interfered with the removal of food.[3]

Peace had been signed, but there was no prospect of a dissolution of the volunteer body. The last reviews had been the most splendid hitherto celebrated, and the institution had become a great recognised national militia, discharging many important police functions, and bringing the Protestant gentry and yeomanry into constant connection with each other. An attempt of the Administration under the Duke of Portland to draw off a portion of the volunteer force into some newly organised regiments, called Fencibles, proved very unpopular and met with little success. Constant interchanges of civilities between the volunteers and the ordinary troops marked the

[1] Temple to Townshend, March 12. Temple to North, May 9, 1783.

[2] (Secret and confidential) July 4, 1783, Northington to North.

[3] Temple to North, May 23, 30 Proclamation, June 9. Northington to North, June 10, 26, 1783. *Irish Parl. Debates*, ii. 346, 347.

high position which the force had attained; and when the new Parliament met in October 1783, another vote of thanks to the volunteers for 'their spirited endeavours to provide for the protection of their country, and for their ready and frequent assistance of the civil magistrate in enforcing the due execution of the laws,' was carried through Parliament at the proposal of the Government.[1] The Ministers saw that it was inevitable, and therefore did not wish to lose the credit of proposing it; and among those who disliked the continuance of the volunteers, there were several who were prevented from resigning their posts through fear of being replaced by incendiaries. Grattan and Charlemont had both been made Privy Councillors, but when the volunteers threw themselves into the reform agitation, the relations between the Castle and Charlemont became very cold, and Charlemont was rarely summoned to the meetings of the Council.

Among the measures which were announced in the speech from the throne, were the establishment of a separate post office and Court of Admiralty in Ireland, and at this time the system of annual sessions was introduced. Lord North expressed the strong dislike of the Government in England to this innovation, but Northington urged that it was generally expected in Ireland, and that it appeared to the King's servants both useful and inevitable. It would accelerate decisions upon appeals, which were now confined to the Irish House of Lords. It would prevent delay in adopting any new commercial regulations that might be made in the English Parliament, and it was likely to check the growing habit of provincial meetings, which were justified by the long recesses of Parliament. Supplies were accordingly henceforth voted only for a year.[2]

The hostility which the simple repeal question had created between Flood and Grattan became deeper and deeper. The dominant idea of the policy of Grattan at this time was that the public mind should at all hazards be calmed. Ireland, he contended, had passed through a period of violent and convulsive change, and there was great fear lest the fever of political

[1] Oct. 14, 1783, Northington to North. *Irish Parl. Debates*, ii. 9.

[2] Northington to North, Sept. 23, Oct. 18. North to Northington, Oct. 7, 1783.

agitation should become inveterate in her system. Nothing could be more fatal to her new-born liberty, than that a body of armed men should constitute themselves permanently into a kind of legislative assembly, should dictate measures to Parliament, should overawe Parliament by scarcely disguised menaces of force. Next to the liberty of their own country, the first object of all true Irish patriots should be the strength and unity of the Empire, and the extinction of all feelings of disloyalty and animosity towards England. The agitation on the simple repeal question had already done much mischief, and it was evident that a very dangerous spirit of restlessness was abroad. A violent and sometimes a seditious press had arisen, and there were agitators who sought to gain popularity, power, and perhaps reputation, by inflaming the public mind against England and against the Parliament, at a time when a great part of the Protestant population were under arms, and when the recent triumphs in America had stimulated the republican elements that were smouldering in Ulster. The example of Flood, and the recent resolutions of the volunteers, had greatly intensified the spirit of disquietude. Irish manufacturers, who found themselves in a period of extreme distress, and overpowered by English competition, began to call loudly for protecting duties. An absentee tax was proposed by Molyneux, and discussed at much length, but it ultimately only found twenty-two supporters.[1] Sir Edward Newenham, an ardent partisan of Flood, introduced, without a shadow of reason, a motion for limiting the supplies to six months. The language used by the volunteers, and by their organs in the press, on the question of parliamentary reform, was much less that of a petition than of a command. There were loud and justifiable complaints of the extravagant management of the finances. The revenue, indeed, it was said, had in two years increased more than three hundred thousand pounds, but there was an annual deficit of about two hundred thousand pounds, and Ireland, which had no national debt in 1755, had now a debt of nearly two millions.[2] The field for retrenchment in the civil administra-

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* ii. 277-289.

[2] Ibid. ii. 34, 79, 81, 103. Grattan estimated the increase of the revenue during the last two years at 100,000*l.* per year (p. 103).

tion was very ample, but Flood insisted that the most important retrenchment should be sought in the military department, that in a country like Ireland a peace establishment of 15,000 men was extravagantly and fatally large, that 12,000 men would be amply sufficient, and that the condition of the finances imperatively demanded the reduction. He brought forward the subject again and again with great pertinacity, and it is probable that one leading object of the proposal was to throw the country still more absolutely into the hands of the volunteers.

There was little danger of Parliament adopting these measures, and Flood and his followers were usually supported only by a small minority; but the agitation of such questions greatly increased the disquietude of the public mind. Grattan opposed the proposition for reducing the army with especial vehemence. The magnitude of the Irish army, he said, was Ireland's contribution to the defence of the Empire, and her compensation for the protection she received from the British fleet. The augmentation, under Lord Townshend, was part of a distinct compact which was binding in honour though not in law. It had been made at a time when England possessed America and owed 150 millions less than she owes at present, when Ireland had no trade at all, and when her Constitution was denied. Since then Ireland had regained her Constitution and her commercial liberty; England had conceded to her the vast benefits of the plantation trade, and the Irish Parliament had pledged itself to stand or fall with her. Was this a period in which Ireland, with an augmented revenue, an increased population, and a vastly greater interest in the Empire, could honourably withdraw her old support?[1]

The sense of the House was strongly and manifestly on the side of Grattan, and, in the course of the debate, more than one voice urged upon the volunteers the propriety of disbanding. The course adopted by Flood, though it had re-established his popularity with the volunteers, had alienated him from several of his most valuable friends, had produced a strong remonstrance from Charlemont, and had more than once brought him into collision with Grattan. In October 1783, in one of the debates on the proposed reduction of the forces, a violent altercation broke out

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* 84, 103, 104.

between Flood and Grattan, and two invectives, both of them disgracefully virulent, and one of them of extraordinary oratorical power, made all cordial co-operation, for the future, extremely difficult. The interposition of the House prevented a duel. Flood afterwards very magnanimously occupied the chair at a volunteer meeting, when a vote of thanks to Grattan was passed, and Grattan long afterwards, in his pamphlet on the Union, and on many occasions in private conversation, bore a high testimony to the greatness of Flood; but the old friendship of the two leaders was for ever at an end, and words had been spoken which could never be forgiven.

The essentially political attitude which the volunteers were now assuming created much alarm. In July 1783, 'a committee of correspondence,' appointed by the delegates assembled at Lisburne for the purpose of arranging the forthcoming meeting at Dungannon, wrote to Charlemont asking his support and advice. They begged him to indicate 'such specific mode of reform' as appeared to him most suitable for the condition of Ireland, and at the same time to inform them, whether in his opinion the volunteer assembly should bring within the range of their discussions at Dungannon, such subjects as the propriety of shortening the duration of parliaments, exclusion of pensioners, a limitation of the numbers of placemen, and a tax on absentees. Charlemont perceived with much alarm the disposition of the force to attempt to regulate and perhaps control the whole field of legislation, and he urged the committee to confine themselves to the single question of reform, and on this question to content themselves with asserting the necessity of the measure, leaving the mode of carrying it out, exclusively to the mature deliberation of Parliament.[1]

The volunteers could hardly have had a safer counsellor, and Charlemont, though by no means a man of genius, exercised at this time a very great influence in Irish politics. He was now in his fifty-fifth year. He had inherited his title when still a child, and having never gone through the discipline of a public school, had spent more than nine years in travelling on the Continent. For some years he plunged deeply into the dissipations of the lax society in Italy, but he never lost a sense of higher

[1] Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 94–98.

things, and he brought back a great taste and passion for art, a wide range of ornamental scholarship, and a very real earnestness and honesty of character. At Turin he had formed a close intimacy with Hume, but it had not impaired either his religious principles or his strong Whig convictions. In Paris he had discussed Irish politics very fully with Montesquieu, and was struck with the earnestness with which that great philosopher recommended a legislative union with England as the best safeguard of Irish liberty. He afterwards became an intimate friend of Burke, an early member of that brilliant club which Johnson and Reynolds had formed, a careful and discriminating student of the debates in the English Parliament, and then an almost constant resident in Ireland and a leading figure in Irish politics. A nervousness which he was never able to overcome, and which was aggravated by much ill-health, kept him completely silent in the House of Lords, and in his intimate circle he often showed himself somewhat vain and irresolute and easily offended; but in addition to his great social position, he had personal qualities of a kind which often go further in politics than great brilliancy of intellect, and he was one of the very few prominent Irish politicians who had never stooped to any corrupt traffic with the Government.

Like his contemporary Rockingham he possessed a transparent purity and delicacy of honour, which won the confidence of all with whom he came in contact, a judgment singularly clear, temperate and unbiassed, a natural affability of manner which made him peculiarly fitted to conciliate conflicting interests and characters. He wrote well, though often with a vein of weak sentimentalism which was the prevailing affectation of his time, and he threw himself into many useful national enterprises with great industry, and with invariable singleness of purpose. He was a Whig of Whigs—with all that love of compromise; that cautious though genuine liberality; that combination of aristocratic tastes and popular principles; that dislike to violence, exaggeration, and vulgarity; that profound veneration for the British Constitution, and that firm conviction that every desirable change could be effected within its limits, which characterised the best Whig thought of the time. His property lay in the province which was the centre of the volunteer movement. He

was one of the earliest and most active of its organisers, and the unbounded confidence of the more liberal section of the Irish gentry in his penetration and his judgment, had raised him speedily to its head.

His position was, however, now becoming very difficult. Flood and Grattan, with whom he had hitherto most cordially co-operated, were alienated from each other, and both of them were in some degree alienated from him. Though he ultimately admitted the expediency of passing the Act of Renunciation, and though he cordially maintained the necessity of parliamentary reform, he strongly disapproved of the conduct of Flood in raising the first question, and in bringing the second question under the deliberations of an armed body. Grattan had been first brought into Parliament by Charlemont, and a deep attachment subsisted between them; but a coldness had lately grown up which soon culminated in a breach. Grattan was now wholly alienated from the volunteers; he would evidently have gladly seen their dissolution at the peace, and he cordially supported Lord Northington's Administration. Charlemont, on the other hand, was strongly in favour of the maintenance in arms of the volunteer force. He had more and more gravitated to opposition, and he was in consequence rarely consulted by the Administration with which Grattan was in close alliance. Grattan appears to have done everything in his power to soothe the irritation of his friend, and his letters to him are extremely honourable to the writer; but he had to deal with a somewhat fretful and morbid temperament, and he was not able to succeed. At the same time a new democratic and even seditious spirit was rising among the volunteers, with which Charlemont had no sympathy and which it was very doubtful whether he could control, and a very singular rival had lately arisen in the North, who threatened, for a time, to obtain an ascendency in the volunteer body, and to throw the whole of Ireland into a flame.

Frederick Augustus, Earl of Bristol, and Bishop of Derry, was the third son of that Lord Hervey who was long chiefly remembered as the victim of the most savage of all the satires of Pope, but whose reputation has in the present century been greatly raised by the publication of those masterly memoirs in

which he had described the Court and politics of George II. His family had been noted for their eccentricity, and a saying attributed to Chesterfield, that God created men, women, and Herveys, has been often repeated.[1] As was frequently the case with the younger sons of great families, he entered the Church without the smallest ecclesiastical leaning; and his eldest brother having been for a few months Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, he obtained the promise of an Irish bishopric. In 1767 during the Viceroyalty of Lord Townshend he was made Bishop of Cloyne. He was translated in the following year to the enormously rich bishopric of Derry, and in 1779 he inherited an English earldom and a great fortune. Rich, hospitable, lavishly generous, passionately fond of show and popularity, an exquisite judge of art and by no means destitute of general learning and ability, anxious to search out and to encourage intellectual merit wherever he could find it,[2] and quite capable of playing many different parts with spirit and distinction, he soon made himself one of the most popular men in Ulster. No previous bishop in his diocese had done so much to build, restore, or embellish churches, and he also showed himself extremely liberal and energetic in developing the natural resources of the country. A new bridge over the Foyle was largely due to his energy. He undertook extensive operations in searching for coal. He opened out wild and uncivilised districts in his diocese by roads constructed at his own expense. He built two great palaces, collected pictures and statues, exercised a very liberal hospitality, and took especial pains to place himself on the most friendly terms with the Presbyterians. With the Catholics he was equally friendly. We have already caught some glimpses of the part which he took both at Rome and in Ireland in favour of the earlier Toleration Bill; and it was noticed on the monument that was erected to his memory after his death, that the Roman Catholic bishop and the resident Presbyterian minister at Derry were both among the contributors.[3]

[1] It has also been ascribed to Lord Townshend and to Lady Mary Montague.

[2] See Burdy's *Life of Skelton* (Skelton's *Works*, i. xcvi. xcvii.)

[3] Many particulars relating to the Ulster life of the Bishop will be found in an interesting sketch of his history by the Rev. Classon Porter, a gentleman who has contributed much that is valuable to the local history of Ulster. It is reprinted from the *Northern Whig*.

His papers have unfortunately perished, and we have no means of ascertaining whether any real change had passed over his character and opinions, which may help to explain the strange want of keeping between the different descriptions or periods of his life. In 1779 Shelburne, who knew Ireland well, spoke in the House of Lords in strong terms of the neglect of duty and the abuse of patronage which were common among the Irish bishops, but he observed that there were a few eminent exceptions—the most remarkable being Primate Robinson and the Bishop of Derry.[1] Charlemont, and Hardy the biographer of Charlemont, though extremely hostile to the Bishop, have both spoken in high terms of the manner in which he distributed his patronage among the oldest and most respectable clergy of his diocese.[2] But the most curious picture of the Bishop, when read in the light of his later career, is that which is furnished by the Journal of Wesley, who, when he came over to Ireland on his evangelical mission, found in Lord Bristol a most cordial supporter. 'The Bishop,' writes Wesley, describing a Sunday at Londonderry in 1775, 'preached a judicious, useful sermon on the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost. He is both a good writer and a good speaker, and he celebrated the Lord's Supper with admirable solemnity.' A few days later, 'the Bishop invited me to dinner, and told me, "I know you do not love our hours, and will therefore order dinner to be on table between two and three o'clock." We had a piece of boiled beef and an English pudding. This is true good breeding. The Bishop is entirely easy and unaffected in his whole behaviour, exemplary in all parts of public worship, and plenteous in good works.'[3]

It is curious to compare this picture with the emphatic judgment of Charlemont, who, while admitting the many generous actions of the Bishop, described him as a bad father, a worse husband, a determined deist, very blasphemous in his conversation, and greatly addicted to intrigue and gallantry; with that of Fox, who described him as a madman, and a dishonest one; with that of Barrington, who delineated him at great length as a brilliant but purely secular and most unscrupulous

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xx. 1164.

[2] Charlemont's *MS. Autobiography*; Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 103.

[3] Wesley's *Journal*, June 1, 6, 1775.

politician. Jeremy Bentham met him at Bowood in 1781, and described him in his diary in a passage which bears a strong impress of truth. 'He is a most excellent companion, pleasant, intelligent, well-bred and liberal-minded to the last degree. He has been everywhere and knows everything.' He told Bentham that the rectors in his diocese enjoyed incomes of from 250*l.* to 1,500*l.* a year, and declared it to be a wonder and a shame that they should be suffered to remain in possession of so much wealth, since scarcely any of them resided, and since they only paid their curates '50*l.* a year, which is their own estimate of what the service done is worth. . . . He assumed to me,' continued Bentham, 'unless I much mistook him, a principal share in the merit of carrying the Toleration Act through the Irish House of Lords. He was, in his own mind at least, for going further and admitting them to all offices, that of member of Parliament not excepted.' Lord Shelburne, Bentham says, spoke of 'the flightiness of Lord Bristol, who he says is equally known for his spirit of intrigue and his habit of drawing the long bow. Indeed, there does seem to be something of that in him.'[1]

There were reports that Lord Bristol had been refused the bishopric of Durham, and had even aspired to the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland; but they seem to be attested by no evidence, and it was probably no deeper reason than an uncontrollable love of excitement and of popularity, that produced the strange spectacle of a man, who was at once a great bishop and an English earl, exerting all his energies to enroll and arm Irish volunteers,[2] and endeavouring to bring them into collision with the Irish Parliament and with England. At the assembly of volunteer delegates, which met at Lisburne in July 1783, a committee was appointed to collect information about the state of representation in Ireland, and to correspond with the different reform associations in England; and the general meeting of delegates of the whole province of Ulster, which was held at Dungannon in the ensuing September, passed resolutions declaring that, a majority of the Irish House of Commons being

[1] Bentham's *Works*, x. 93, 94, 101.

[2] See the curious letter of the Bishop offering assistance for the purchase of camp equipage. Grattan's *Life*, ii. 262, 263.

returned by the mandates of a few peers and commoners, that House was in no sense a representation of the people; that 'the elective franchise ought of right to extend to all those, and those only, who are likely to exercise it for the public good,' and that the present imperfect representation, and long duration of Parliament, were intolerable grievances. They at the same time called upon the few representatives of free constituencies to refuse to vote any but short bills of supply, till their grievances were redressed; expressed the warmest sympathy with the English and Scotch reformers, and summoned the volunteers of all four provinces to meet together, to elect a convention of delegates, chosen by ballot from each county in Ireland. This convention was to meet in Dublin on November 10, shortly after Parliament had assembled and while it was still sitting, to frame a plan of reform, and to demand those rights without which 'the forms of a free nation would be a curse.'

Neither Charlemont nor Flood were present at these proceedings. The first had probably abstained from policy, and the second on account of a passing illness. Colonel Stewart, the member for Tyrone, who was an intimate friend of Charlemont, was in the chair, but the influence of the Bishop appears to have predominated, and he had put himself at the head of the democracy of the North. Being absolutely free from every form of ecclesiastical superstition, and the most emphatic advocate of a wide measure of parliamentary reform, and of the most complete liberality in Church and State, he had become exceedingly popular among the Presbyterians, and in May 1784 a most curious address was presented to him by the Presbytery of Derry, expressing 'their perfect approbation of the liberality of his Lordship's religious sentiments.' 'Christianity,' they proceed, 'is liberal, and he is the best disciple of Jesus Christ who possesses the most extensive charity and good-will to the human race. . . . As ministers of the Gospel of Peace . . . they rejoice in this opportunity of giving their tribute of deserved praise to a character in every respect so dignified.' 'The liberality of sentiment,' answered the Bishop, 'which you ascribe to me, flows from the rare consistency of a Protestant bishop, who feels it his duty, and has therefore made it his practice, to venerate in others that inalienable exercise of private judgment

which he and his ancestors claimed for themselves. . . . On the great object which now centres in me the applauses of such various and even contradictory denominations of citizens, I do own to you the very rock which founds my cathedral is less immovable than my purpose to liberate this high-mettled nation from the petulant and rapacious oligarchy which plunder and insult it.'[1]

It was not, however, merely on the Presbyterians that the Bishop relied. One of his leading and most distinctive notions was to bring the Catholic body into active politics, by claiming for them the elective franchise and by inducing them to agitate for it themselves. At the meeting of Dungannon the question was already brought forward, but it was laid aside on account of the strenuous opposition of the friends of Charlemont.[2] From this time, however, it entered into the programme of the more democratic party, and overtures to the Roman Catholics emanating for the most part from Presbyterian sources became frequent.[3]

The proposal to hold a volunteer convention in Dublin excited the keenest alarm. It was, in effect, to set up at the doors of the legal Parliament, and at a time when that Parliament was sitting, a rival representative body emanating from and supported by an armed force, and convened for the express purpose of directing or intimidating the Legislature of the nation. Fox wrote with great emphasis, that if such a body were suffered to continue, above all if the smallest concession were made in obedience to its mandates, the freedom of Ireland would be at an end; her boasted Constitution would be replaced by a Government as purely military as that of the Prætorian Guards; demand would follow demand, and complete anarchy would be the inevitable end.[4] At the same time it was almost impossible to prevent the Convention from meeting. The upper classes looked indeed with alarm on the new movement, but the yeomanry of the North were enthusiastic in its favour. Precedents had been established within the last few years, that made it very difficult to condemn it as illegal, and the volunteers had

[1] Mant's *Church History of Ireland*, ii 692–694.

[2] Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 100.

[3] See an example of this in the *Freeman's Journal*, Nov. 20–22, 1783, which Lord Northington sent to England.

[4] Fox to Northington, Nov. 1, 1783. Fox to Burgoyne, Nov. 7, 1783. Grattan's *Life*, iii. 106–116.

assumed such a position that it was almost impossible to repress them. They were a great and disciplined army comprising all that was best in the Protestant population of Ireland. They had been three times thanked by Parliament. The address of the two Houses of Parliament in 1782 had been carried to the Castle between two lines of volunteers. A succession of Lord-Lieutenants had courted and eulogised them at a time when they were actually interfering in politics, and the Renunciation Act which had just been carried in England was mainly attributed to their influence. To prevent them from now meeting in convention would in the opinion of the Lord-Lieutenant be dangerous, or impossible.

Charlemont was confronted with that question which under different forms and names has constantly pressed upon Irish politicians. All the information from the North showed that it would be perfectly futile to oppose the meeting of the Convention. He had, as we have seen, tried at the outset to limit its functions to that of petitioning for parliamentary reform; but it was extremely doubtful whether the advice would be taken. The question he had to decide was whether he ought to take part in the Convention or to stand aloof from it. In the one case he would countenance and participate in a proceeding which he regarded as dangerous and unconstitutional. In the other case it was tolerably certain that the whole management of the Convention, it was possible that the whole direction of the volunteer force, would fall into the hands of demagogues of the most dangerous type.

Charlemont determined to accept the first alternative, to propose himself, and to induce others of the leading gentry connected with the movement to propose themselves, as candidates for election in the Convention. He has himself stated his motives with great candour. 'Though I never cordially approved of the meeting, yet, as I found it impossible to withstand the general impulse towards it, . . . I did not choose to exert myself against it, especially as there was cause to fear my exertions would be fruitless, and if so might prevent my being useful towards moderating and guiding those measures which I could not with efficiency oppose, and directing that torrent which might otherwise have swept down all before it. I had

upon mature consideration determined that to render the assembly as respectable as possible was the next best mode to the entire prevention of it.'[1]

The efforts of Charlemont were in a great degree successful. The Convention, he says, formed 'a truly respectable body of gentlemen, for though some of the lower classes had been delegated, by far the majority were men of rank and fortune, and many of them members of Parliament, Lords and Commons.' Among the delegates were Charlemont, Flood, and the Bishop of Derry.[2]

The Bishop did everything in his power, to aggravate by his conduct the dissension between the Convention and Parliament. He was now accustomed to go about, escorted by a troop of volunteer light cavalry enrolled and commanded by his nephew, George Robert Fitzgerald, a man who about three years later was hanged for a very aggravated murder, and whose history had been already a strange illustration of the utter lawlessness prevailing in some sections of Irish life. He was the son of a gentleman of considerable fortune in the wildest parts of Mayo. His mother, Lady Mary Hervey, once maid of honour to the Princess Amelia, and sister to three successive Earls of Bristol, had been compelled by the gross ill-usage of her husband to seek a separate maintenance, and became in later life a prominent figure in the early Evangelical movement, and an intimate friend of Venn and of Fletcher of Madeley.[3] George Robert, their eldest son, was educated at Eton; he connected himself by marriage with the great families of Leinster and Conolly; travelled on the Continent, was presented at the French Court, wrote both prose and verse with some grace, and concealed under the appearance of a well-bred, polished, and almost effeminate gentleman, a character reckless and savage to the very verge of insanity. He was soon noted as one of the best shots, one of the most desperate duellists, and one of the most arrogant bullies in the West, and a crowd of stories are told of the savage animosity and the brutal insults with which he pursued his enemies, and of the terror which he excited in the wild

[1] Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 106.

[2] Ibid. ii. 106.

[3] *Life of the Countess of Huntingdon*, ii. 194, 195.

country in which he lived. Among many other strange freaks, he was accustomed to hunt the fox in the deadest hours of the night, to the terror of the superstitious peasantry, who, as the chase swept by and as the red gleam of the torches flashed through the darkness, imagined that hell had broken loose and that demon hunters were infesting the land. In consequence of a fierce family quarrel he seized upon his father and kept him for five months in strict confinement in his house at Rockfield, under the guard of 200 or 300 ruffians who followed his fortunes, and many of whom had escaped from gaol. Cannon were mounted around the house; all communications were cut off; although the younger brother obtained without difficulty a writ, the sheriff did not dare to execute it, and, at last, when the assizes were being held at Castlebar, George Robert Fitzgerald appeared of his own accord in the court house, and calmly took his place among the grand jurors of the county. The audacity of the proceeding, however, proved too great. The younger brother was present, and at his request the judge ordered the arrest of Fitzgerald, who was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to three years' imprisonment and to a heavy fine. As was generally expected, he did not lie long in prison. Pistols were conveyed to him. He soon in broad daylight escaped, returned to Rockfield, which lay about three miles from Castlebar, and caused the cannon which defended his house to be fired several times in honour of his release. The younger brother urged upon the sheriff the necessity of executing the writ, but was informed that without the assistance of regular troops such an enterprise was hopeless, and Fitzgerald not only remained at large, but exercised a general terrorism over the whole country.

He soon, however, by his own reckless imprudence, fell within the grasp of the law. About three weeks after his escape from Castlebar he ventured to Dublin in the company of his father, and was there, by the instrumentality of his brother, and on the information of his father, arrested and committed to prison. He obtained a writ of error, but the King's Bench affirmed his sentence, and he lay in confinement for more than eighteen months, when bad health, and influence in high quarters, procured his release. At the end of March 1783, the Attorney-General

recommended him for pardon.[1] He appears to have speedily gone to his uncle at Derry, and to have thrown himself actively into volunteering, and in May 1784, little more than a year after his release from prison, through the influence of the Bishop, he was presented with the freedom of the city of Londonderry.[2]

Accompanied by the troop of dragoons commanded by this singular personage, the Bishop of Derry entered Dublin in November 1783 in royal state. Dressed entirely in purple, with diamond knee and shoe buckles, and with long gold tassels hanging from his white gloves, he sat in an open landau drawn by six noble horses caparisoned with purple ribands. The dragoons rode on each side of his carriage, which proceeded slowly through the different streets amid the cheers of a large crowd till it arrived at the door of the Parliament House, where a halt was called, and a loud blast of trumpets startled the assembled members. Several wholly ignorant of the cause of the tumult flocked from curiosity to the door, and the Bishop saluted them with royal dignity. The volunteers presented arms; the bands played the Volunteer March; and then, with a defiant blast of trumpets, the procession proceeded on its way. The Bishop was highly elated. He imagined that he would be elected president of the Convention, and he appears to have entertained a real design of heading a rebellion. 'We must have blood, my lord, we must have blood!' he once exclaimed to Lord Charlemont.[3]

[1] See the memorial of Charles Lionel Fitzgerald to the Earl of Carlisle (Sept. 24, 1781), and the letter of G. R. Fitzgerald to the same, Jan. 26, 1781, Irish State Paper Office. Two of Fitzgerald's letters from prison are preserved in the miscellaneous correspondence, Irish State Paper Office; and his very curious memorial to the Government in 1783, and the opinion of the Attorney-General upon it, will be found in the Irish Record Office, Entries of Civil Petitions. See also *The Case of G. R. Fitzgerald, impartially considered, with Anecdotes of his Life* (1786); *A Letter to the Right Hon. W. Eden, by a Member of the Rockfield Legion commanded by G. R. Fitzgerald*; and a curious life of Fitzgerald published in 1786.

[2] Mant's *History of the Irish Church*, ii. 693.

[3] Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*. Barrington's *Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation*, ccvii. xix. Fitzgibbon, many years later, in reviewing this period of Irish history, while speaking of the extreme danger to Government of such a military Convention as that of 1782, made the following remarkable admission: 'In that Convention I will venture to say there was not a single rebel; there was not a member of it who would not willingly have shed his blood in the defence of his Sovereign and of the Constitution.'—Speech of Earl of Clare, February 19, 1798 (Dublin, 1798), p. 80. I believe this was certainly not true of the Bishop of Derry.

Fortunately, however, for the peace of the country, the great majority of the Convention, which assembled in Dublin on November 10, were men of a very different stamp from the warlike Bishop. To his great disappointment Charlemont was elected the chairman, and though the Convention contained some demagogues and incendiaries, it consisted chiefly of country gentlemen of character and position, and contained several experienced and constitutional politicians, who had been induced by Charlemont to offer themselves as delegates for the express purpose of moderating its proceedings, and also some warm friends of the Government, who deliberately laboured to perplex its debates by divided counsels and multiplied propositions.[1] The meeting was first held in the Exchange, but was afterwards adjourned to the Rotunda. Having endeavoured to justify their proceedings by a resolution that, 'the Protestant inhabitants of this country are required by the statute law to carry arms and have the use of them, and are not by their compliance with the law excluded from the exercise of their civil rights,' and having asserted in the strongest terms their attachment to the Sovereign and to the Constitution, they proceeded to the great task of drawing up a scheme of parliamentary reform. On the motion of the Bishop of Derry, a committee consisting of one member from each county was appointed to frame a plan for the approbation of the Convention, but little progress was made till, at the suggestion of the same person, Flood, who was not on the committee, was called in as an assessor. His practised eloquence and great constitutional knowledge soon obtained a complete ascendency. The Bishop more than once endeavoured

[1] 'The next step was to try by means of our friends in this assembly [the Convention] to perplex its proceedings and to create confusion in their deliberations, in order to bring their meeting into contempt and to create a necessity of its dissolving itself. This method had considerable effect. They are strongly embarrassed by a multiplicity of plans, and are much alarmed by the Roman Catholics claiming a right to vote.'—Northington to Fox, Nov. 17, 1783; Grattan's *Life*, iii. 130, 131. In the beginning of 1784 Northington recommended very strongly Ogle, the member for Wexford, for the place of registrar of deeds. He says, 'His private character and public conduct command universal esteem. He has given the most decided and cordial support upon all occasions to my administration. . . . His zeal likewise induced him to attend the Convention, of which he was chosen a member, where he exerted his efforts constantly to check and control the mischievous tendency of measures proposed there, and to support what might be the wishes of the Government.' — Northington to Sydney, Jan. 25, 1784.

to bring forward the question of the Catholic franchise, but Flood and Charlemont opposed him, and though he met with considerable support he was defeated.[1] A proposition to recommend vote by ballot was rejected after some debate, and at last, after three weeks of deliberation, a very comprehensive plan of reform drawn up by Flood was agreed upon. Charlemont and the five other borough proprietors who sat in the Convention, declared their readiness to surrender their patronage. At length, on November 29, 1783, the preliminary measures being all accomplished, Flood proposed that he and such other members of Parliament as were present, should at once proceed from the Convention to the Parliament, and move for leave to bring in a Bill of reform corresponding to the plan which had been agreed upon, and that 'the Convention should not adjourn till the fate of the motion was known.'

It would be impossible to assert more strongly the position of the Convention as a kind of rival Legislature, and to bring it more directly into conflict with the Parliament. Charlemont greatly disapproved of the step, and he would gladly have sent down the Volunteer Bill to the different counties to be recommended by public meetings and petitions; but Flood would admit no delay, and his influence, supported by that of the Bishop, swayed the meeting. That night he appeared with several other members of the Convention in the House of Commons, dressed in the uniform of the volunteers, and asked leave to bring in his Reform Bill. In substance, the Volunteer Reform Bill was much less extreme than the schemes of reform which about this time were recommended by the Duke of Richmond and other reformers in England. It proposed to restrict the right of voting, except in the case of electors who possessed freehold or leasehold property of 20*l.* a year, to men who had actually resided in the constituency six months out of the preceding twelve; to throw open the decayed boroughs by extending their franchise to the neighbouring district; to annul by

[1] 'The Bishop again renewed the Catholic question, in which he was warmly supported by many of the Connaught and by some of the Munster delegates, while even a few of the Northern dissenters, by their speeches and acquiescence, appeared already to indicate the approach of that strange madness by which they were, not long after, actuated.'—Charlemont's *MS. Autobiography*.

Act of Parliament the by-laws by which any corporation had contracted the right of franchise; to give votes to all Protestants resident in any city or borough, who possessed freeholds or leaseholds of a specified value and duration; to incapacitate all who held pensions during pleasure from sitting in Parliament; to compel every member of Parliament accepting a pension for life, or any place under the Crown, to vacate his seat and submit to a new election; to oblige all members to swear that they had not given money for their seats; and finally to limit the duration of Parliament to three years.

The prospects of the Bill, however, were soon seen to be hopeless. It asked at least two-thirds of the members of the House of Commons to make a sacrifice of power, privilege, or money, such as no Legislature or ascendant caste has ever consented to make, except under the pressure of extreme necessity or of extreme enthusiasm, and it asked them to do this at a time when they had every motive to strengthen them in their resistance. A large proportion of the Convention, including its president, were notoriously half-hearted, or hostile to its proceedings. Many of the leading patriots of Ireland, and among them the chief author of the Constitution of 1782, were utterly opposed to the meeting of the Convention. The language and conduct of the Bishop of Derry; the Catholic question suddenly thrown into the arena of Irish politics; the violence of a considerable part of the press, had disturbed, irritated, and divided the nation. The natural pride of Parliament was aroused by the encroachment on its prerogative. The elections were just over, and they had on the whole been favourable to the Government, and the Government was inflexibly opposed to all concessions to the Convention. Yelverton, who was Attorney-General, in a speech of great power moved that the House should refuse even to take the Bill into consideration, as it originated with an armed body, and was an attempt to compel Parliament to register the edicts of another assembly, and to receive propositions at the point of the bayonet. Flood answered that he and his colleagues had never mentioned the volunteers. They came as members of Parliament to present a regular Bill in regular form. Would the House receive it from them? Under the Duke of Portland, the House had consented without difficulty

to take a Reform Bill into consideration. The anomalies and abuses of the representation were glaring and notorious. Petitions from many counties showed the sense of the nation on the subject. Would Parliament refuse even to inquire into the grievance? He and his friends had not introduced the volunteers into the debate, but as they were introduced, he would not shrink from defending them. He recapitulated with great power their services to the Constitution, reminded the House how largely Parliament in its political struggle had rested upon them, and asked whether it was Parliament or the volunteers who had changed. A positive Act directs that every Protestant in Ireland is to bear arms, and 'because one man fulfils more of his duty as a citizen than another, should he enjoy less of a citizen's privilege?'

The debate was continued till three in the morning, and it terminated in the House refusing by 157 votes against 77 to receive the Bill. A resolution moved by the Attorney-General, to the effect that it had 'become necessary to declare that this House will maintain its just rights and privileges against all encroachments whatever,' and an address to the King moved by Conolly asserting the 'perfect satisfaction' of the House with the Constitution and the determination to support it with their lives and fortunes, were then carried. Grattan, in a few conciliatory words, supported the proposition to consider the Bill upon its own merits, but he voted silently for the ensuing resolution.[1]

This memorable night gave a fatal blow to the political influence of the volunteers. There were not wanting indeed among them wild spirits who would have gladly pushed matters to extremity, but Charlemont strained his influence to the utmost and succeeded in putting an end to the Convention. The debate in the House of Commons took place on Saturday night, and Charlemont with some difficulty persuaded the Convention, in spite of their previous resolution, to adjourn to the ensuing Monday. On Sunday he held a meeting of his own friends, and they agreed together, that the Convention must be dissolved. On Monday the 1st and on Tuesday the 2nd of

[1] *Irish Parl. Debates*, ii. 225–264. The numbers in the first division are given erroneously in the *Parl. Debates* as 158 to 49. The *Commons' Journals*, however, and also a letter of Lord Northington (Nov. 30, 1783), give them as in the text.

December the Convention again met, and Flood fully supported Charlemont in advocating moderation. The Bishop of Derry and Sir Edward Newenham, who represented the more democratic party, were both present, and the debate appears to have been full and dignified. It was agreed to take no formal notice of the recent proceedings in Parliament. A resolution was passed asserting anew the manifest necessity of a parliamentary reform. The delegates agreed to forward the plan of reform adopted by the Convention to their several districts, and to endeavour by public meetings, petitions, instructions to members, and the publication of abuses to obtain for it a great weight of civil support. The Convention then proceeded to adjourn *sine die*. One of its last acts was an address to the King, which was composed and moved by Flood, and which may be looked upon as its defence before the bar of history. In this remarkable document 'the delegates of all the volunteers of Ireland' begged 'to express their zeal for his Majesty's person, family, and Government, and their inviolable attachment to the perpetual connection of his Majesty's crown of this kingdom with that of Great Britain; to offer to his Majesty their lives and fortunes in support of his Majesty's rights, and of the glory and prosperity of the British Empire; to assert with an humble but an honest confidence that the volunteers of Ireland did, without expense to the public, protect his Majesty's kingdom of Ireland against his foreign enemies at a time when the remains of his Majesty's forces in this country were not adequate to that service; to state that through their means the laws and police of this kingdom had been better executed and maintained than at any former period within the memory of man, and to implore his Majesty that their humble wish to have certain manifest perversions of the parliamentary representation of this kingdom remedied by the Legislature in some reasonable degree, might not be imputed to any spirit of innovation in them, but to a sober and laudable desire to uphold the Constitution, to confirm the satisfaction of their fellow-subjects, and to perpetuate the cordial union of both kingdoms.'[1]

[1] See Grattan's *Life*, iii. 159–162; Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 138–142; *Charlemont Papers*. There is a full report of the proceedings of the Convention in a pamphlet, called *Proceedings of the Volunteer Delegates of Ireland* (1784), and also in the *Hibernian Journal* for 1783.

The Volunteer Convention was peacefully dissolved, but in the March of the following year Flood again brought the Reform Bill before Parliament. It was supported by petitions from twenty-six counties. It was introduced and defended with a moderation that could hardly offend the most sensitive politician, and there was no parade or menace of military force. As might have been expected in a Parliament where the Government was hostile to reform and where more than two-thirds of the members represented nomination boroughs, it was rejected almost with contempt. The House did not, it is true, as on the former occasion refuse leave for its introduction, but it was thrown out on the second reading by a majority of seventy-four.[1] From that time the conviction sank deep into the minds of many that reform in Ireland could only be effected by revolution, and the rebellion of 1798 might be already foreseen.

So ended a most unhappy episode in the history of Ireland. The divisions among the reformers had paralysed their force, and in the opinion of the great majority of the best judges, the creation of a Convention and the attempt to dictate measures to Parliament were gross political errors. There have always, however, been a few writers who have in this controversy adopted the side of Flood, who have maintained that if Grattan had not stood aloof and if Charlemont had been truly in earnest, the volunteers might have forced a reform bill through Parliament, and that the transcendant importance of making the Irish Parliament a really representative body outweighed the great danger and evil of the precedent that would have been created. Sir Jonah Barrington, the brilliant Irish historian of the period, adopted this view, and it was strongly supported by another writer whose name will have greater weight with English readers. Jeremy Bentham lived at a time when the recollection of the volunteer movement was still vivid, and he appears to have paid special attention to its history. He described

Barrington (*Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation*, c. xix.) has grossly misrepresented the closing scenes of the Convention, accusing Charlemont of having come to the Hall before the usual hour on Monday, the 1st, with his own friends, and adjourned the Convention *sine die* before the arrival of the opposite party. As a matter of fact the debate extended over two days, and Flood, the Bishop of Derry, and all the other more conspicuous members of the Convention were present.

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iii. 13–23, 43–85

the conduct of the volunteer organisation during five troublous years as one of the very best illustrations in history of the high qualities of patriotism and self-control that are produced in a self-governed democracy. They 'exalted,' he said, 'the average mass of public and private felicity in Ireland to a pitch unknown before or since, and as at once a cause and a consequence of it, public and private virtue.' 'Commercial emancipation and parliamentary emancipation united the wishes of almost everybody . . . and nothing could be more evident than that but for the armed association they never could have been accomplished.' The pressure of the Convention, he thinks, was 'the only means by which any constitutional reform could have been effected,' and he attributes it wholly to the half-heartedness of Charlemont, of Grattan and their party, that 'Mr. Grattan's great and worthy rival Flood' did not succeed in carrying reform.'[1]

The question is not susceptible of any positive solution, and the difficulties on all sides seemed nearly insuperable. The experience of all countries shows that a monopoly of power, as complete as that which was possessed by a small group of borough owners in Ireland, is never, or scarcely ever, broken down except by measures bordering on revolution. The Reform Bill of 1832 would never have been carried, but for an agitation which convinced the most enlightened statesmen that the country could not be peacefully governed on any other condition. Yet the English monopoly before 1832 was but a faint shadow of that Irish Parliament, in which more than two-thirds of the representatives were nominated by individual patrons, and a majority were dependent on a few great families. Corruption ever follows monopoly as the shadow the substance, and where political power was concentrated in so few hands, party management necessarily resolved itself into personal influence. The Protestant yeomanry of the North, and the great bulk of the Protestant gentry, found themselves either unrepresented or most inadequately represented; and these classes, who comprised most of the intelligence, and a great preponderance of the property, of the country, mainly constituted at this time both the volunteers and the reformers of Ireland.[2]

[1] Bentham, *Radicalism not dangerous*, part iv.; *Collected Works*, iii. 613–620.

[2] 'If property and fortune are the

To create popular, but at the same time purely Protestant, institutions was the aim of Charlemont and Flood, and the whole history of the volunteer organisation appears to me to show that the ascendant caste had attained a level of political intelligence and capacity which fully fitted it for increased political power. Beyond this Flood and Charlemont refused to go. To place political power in the hands of the vast, ignorant, and turbulent Catholic peasantry would, they maintained, be an act of madness which would imperil every institution in the country, shake property to its very basis, and probably condemn Ireland to a long period of anarchy. I have already quoted the remarkable letter, in which as late as 1791 Charlemont predicted that a full century was likely to elapse before the mass of the Irish Catholics could be safely entrusted with political power;[1] and in his comments on the proceedings of the Convention of 1783, he expressed his views on the subject with great clearness. 'Every immunity,' he wrote, 'every privilege of citizenship should be given to the Catholics excepting only arms and legislation, either of which being granted them would, I conceive, shortly render Ireland a Catholic country, totally break its connection with England,' and force it to resort to the protection of France or Spain.[2] Flood, as we have seen, held very similar opinions, and it appears to have been partly in order to divert the volunteers from taking up the Catholic question that he pushed on so strenuously the question of reform. A democracy planted in an aristocracy, popular institutions growing out of an intelligent and ascendant class, formed their ideal, and the memory of ancient Athens with its democracy of 30,000 free citizens

criteria of consequence, the members of the Convention were of equal importance, and possessed an equal interest in the public welfare as the members of the House of Commons. . . . There cannot be a more irrefragable argument in favour of a reform of Parliament than, originating with the people, that it should be embraced by almost every man of rank and fortune in the kingdom, except the individuals whose respective interests and usurpation were supposed to be affected by a more equal representation.' 'The Volunteer Reform Bill,' says the same writer, 'was neither fraught with speculative principles nor new-fangled doctrines; it dealt neither in experiment nor innovation, and though possibly not the best that human wisdom could devise, yet at least it must have had some excellencies to recommend it, from the almost unanimous applause that awaited it in every quarter of the kingdom.'—*History of the last Session of Parliament*, by a member of the sub-committee of the Convention (Dublin, 1784), pp. 9, 10.

[1] See vol. iv. pp. 471, 472.

[2] *MS. Autobiography.*

rising above a vast population of unrepresented slaves was probably present to many minds.

Such a reform, they maintained, would have at least placed the Irish Parliament on a secure basis, made it a real representative of the intelligence and property of Ireland, put an end to the inveterate system of corruption, and called the action of party government into full and healthy play. The result may appear to show that it would have been wise at almost any hazard, and without any delay, if possible, to have at this time forced a large infusion of the popular element into Parliament, but the result is a less decisive test than is often thought of the wisdom of statesmen. Politics are little more than a calculation of probabilities, and the train of events which appears reasonably the most probable does not always occur. If the course of the world for fifty years after 1782 had been as peaceful as it had been during the first three quarters of the century, reforms might probably have been introduced by slow steps, and no great catastrophe would have occurred. Mere political difficulties and ordinary wars had never seriously affected the loyalty and the peace of the country. The American Revolution with its direct and evident bearing on the relations of dependencies to the mother country was the first contest which acted powerfully upon opinion, and even its influence was of a very sober, measured, and rational kind. Unfortunately for the peace of Ireland, before the close of the century an event occurred which in its immediate moral and political effects was wholly unequalled since the great religious convulsions of the sixteenth century. The fierce spirit of democracy, which the French Revolution had engendered, swept like a hurricane over Europe, lashed into sudden fury popular passions which had slumbered for centuries, and strained to the utmost every beam in the Constitution. Six or seven quiet years were granted to Ireland after her legislative emancipation to prepare for the storm, but when the first blast was felt, nothing had as yet been done, and the Parliament was as far as ever from a real representative of the nation.

I do not propose to examine the history of those years in very minute detail, and shall be content if I can sketch their general characteristics. In England another great revolution of power had taken place, which was destined to exercise a great

influence in Ireland. The Coalition Ministry had fallen. Pitt came into power with an irresistible majority, and in February 1784 Lord Northington left Ireland, and the Duke of Rutland succeeded him as Viceroy, with Thomas Orde as his Chief Secretary. For some months after the dissolution of the Convention a dangerous agitation might be discerned. 'A rage for supporting the Convention,' wrote one of Charlemont's best informed correspondents, 'has laid hold on the yeomanry.'[1] The northern prints were full of passionate addresses, and the Bishop of Derry in emphatic language urged the volunteers to make the political emancipation of the Catholics one of their first objects.[2] The Government, alarmed at his proceedings, for a time contemplated the possibility of prosecuting him, and induced a gentleman from the neighbourhood of Derry to attach himself to him as a spy in order to learn his intentions, and to discover whether it was true, as they suspected, that he was importing arms from Birmingham.[3]

The distress which had been so severe in 1783 still continued. In the beginning of 1784 a proclamation was issued forbidding the export of oats, oatmeal, and barley, and Irish letters continually speak of food risen almost to famine prices; of great multitudes of workmen unemployed; of riots to prevent the transport of food from one part of the country to another; of non-importation agreements; illegal combinations of workmen; industry in all its forms lamentably depressed. The cry for protecting duties became louder and louder, and in February an amendment pointing to them was moved by Sir Edward Newenham in the discussion on the address. It was rejected without a division, but Rutland wrote that 'the most difficult subject which is likely to be introduced is that of the protecting duties, which is much more earnestly called for from the distresses which are brought upon the poor, and especially the manufacturers, by the extraordinary inclemency of the season.'[4] Gardiner, one of the members for Dublin, who was aggrieved with the Government because they had not given him a peerage

[1] Sam. Maxwell to Charlemont, Jan. 3, 1784. *Charlemont Papers.*

[2] See his remarkable letters, Barrington, *Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation*, c. xx.

[3] March 20, 1784 (most secret and confidential), Rutland to Sydney. See, too, Grattan's *Life*, iii. 137, 138.

[4] Rutland to Sydney, Feb. 26, 27, 1784. *Irish Parl. Deb.* ii. 374.

which had been promised,[1] placed himself at the head of the movement, and he was afterwards supported by Flood.

Resolutions in favour of protecting duties were more than once introduced, and the question was debated at great length, and with great ability. It was argued that Irish industries could never really flourish unless Parliament adopted the policy of giving native manufactures a decided preference in the home market. History, the supporters of the resolutions said, proved that England and France, and every other country which was at liberty to pursue its own interest, had uniformly pursued this plan, and they only asked the Irish Parliament to follow the example of Great Britain herself, 'of all her wise ministers and of all her wise Parliaments since the Revolution.' A poor country could never, without protective duties, compete even in her domestic market with a far more wealthy neighbour. The long-established manufactures of England could always undersell the unprotected industries of Ireland. Great capitalists could easily afford some temporary loss in order to drive feebler rivals from the field, and the English manufacturer was ready to give two years' credit, while the Irish trader could not give more than six months. The Irish woollen manufacture, which England had formerly so absolutely suppressed, had been in some small degree revived since the more liberal legislation of the last few years; but in spite of the peculiarly excellent quality of Irish wool, it was impossible to maintain it, for while prohibitory laws still excluded Irish wool from the English market, an overwhelming English competition crushed it at home. 'The only way to serve the manufacturers of Ireland was to put them on an equal footing with the English artists, to lay such duties on the import of woollens as might serve to counterbalance the great capitals of the English, the low price of their wool, and their great exactness in furnishing goods.' Prohibitory duties were not asked, and the demand was not made in any spirit of hostility

[1] See in the privately printed Rutland correspondence letters of Pitt to Rutland, Feb. 1, and of Buckingham to Pitt, Jan. 23, 1785. Buckingham says of Gardiner: 'I certainly held myself authorised to hold it [a peerage] out to him in case of his support, which he promised, stating, however, that he had pledged himself to move that question [protecting duties] after the recess, but that he would take the first moment to quit it, and to return to that system from which he had been driven by Lord Northington.'

to England. It arose 'from a commiseration for the distresses of the wretched inhabitants of the country, and not from any party spirit or factious motive whatsoever.' The primary cause of the prevailing distress is to be found 'in a radical error of our commercial system, which nothing but the interference of the Legislature can effectually remove.' 'England has flourished from adopting protecting duties, and Ireland has sunk by neglect of them.' 'Will any man in this House refuse to put the Irish manufacturer upon an equal footing with the Englishman? Is it possible that so just, so equitable a proposition can be rejected?'

Such arguments, urged at a time of acute commercial distress, and supported by the example of nearly every country in Europe, and by numerous petitions from the manufacturing classes, could hardly fail to have much influence on opinion, but the demand was strenuously resisted. Foster, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who led the opposition, urged that the prevailing distress was much more local, and much more due to temporary causes than had been said; that the effect of protective duties would be, that Irish manufactures would deteriorate in quality and increase in price; that the measure the House was asked to adopt would inevitably throw England into an attitude of hostility, and produce reprisals, and that the probable result of such reprisals would be the total ruin of the principal industry of Ireland. The Irish linen manufacture mainly depended on the English market. The immense importance of that market was shown by the fact that while the whole value of English manufactures imported into Ireland was less than one million, Irish linens alone exported to England were valued at a million and a half.[1] England encouraged them by a small bounty, but this was a trifling matter and might be easily replaced. She assisted the manufacture much more effectually by admitting it to her market duty free. This was her compensation for the many Irish industries she had suppressed and excluded, and if this liberty were withdrawn the effects would be most calamitous. England would transfer her linen trade to Germany, and Irish linen would be excluded by heavy duties from her market, as it already was from the chief markets on the Continent.

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iv. 129.

These arguments did not convince the manufacturers, and it was remarked that none of the linen manufacturers opposed the petition for protecting duties, while some of the most considerable actively supported it, maintaining that the country was likely to gain more by moderate duties than she could suffer from any proceeding which Great Britain could find it her interest to take.[1] The political dangers of entering into a commercial contest with England were probably more keenly felt, and the resolutions in favour of protecting duties were rejected by overwhelming majorities. The House of Commons, however, felt that something must be done to meet the wishes of the distressed manufacturers, and that a future conflict with England on commercial questions could only be averted by a commercial arrangement on the basis of reciprocal advantages. After some discussion, an address to the King was unanimously voted on May 13, 1784, in which, after warm protestations of gratitude and loyalty, the House expressed their hope 'that the interval between the close of the present session and the beginning of the next, will afford sufficient opportunity for forming a wise and well-digested plan for a liberal arrangement of commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland to be then brought forward,' and added 'that his faithful Commons humbly beg leave to assure his Majesty that such a plan, formed upon the broad basis of reciprocal advantage, would be the most effectual means of strengthening the Empire at large, and cherishing the common interest and brotherly affection of both kingdoms.'[2]

This address had afterwards important consequences. Some new bounties on manufactures were about the same time granted, and a measure was taken which exercised an influence of the most powerful kind on Irish agriculture. Foster's Corn Law of 1784, granting large bounties on the exportation of corn and imposing heavy duties on its importation, is one of the capital facts in Irish history. In a few years it changed the face of the land, and made Ireland to a great extent an arable instead of a pasture country.

I have devoted, in a former volume, a considerable space to the causes and effects of the immense predominance of pasture

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iii. 135–138. [2] Ibid. iii. 223.

in Ireland during the earlier years of the century. The great and dominant cause was, I believe, that nature has made Ireland a supremely good pasture country, while as a wheat-growing country it is much below the average of Europe; but there were, as we have seen, many subsidiary causes strengthening the tendency. Such were the penal laws; the political and social insecurity which made landlords prefer the simplest type of property; the bad farming which was prevalent; the unjust exemption of pasture from the burden of tithes; the fact that the bulk of the population, and that section which increased most rapidly, lived not upon bread but upon potatoes. It was also a very important consideration that England, till near the close of the century, was a wheat-exporting country. Ireland could find no steady market there, for, except in years of great scarcity, importation was discouraged by heavy duties, and in good years English corn, encouraged by the large English bounty on exportation, and checked by no duty in Ireland, flowed in, in overwhelming quantities, and beat down the price of native corn.

The evils of this state of things were peculiarly felt on account of the great want of manufactures. In the eighteenth, as in the nineteenth century, the main economical evil of Ireland was the small number of its productive industries. The great want of a variety of employments had thrown the population to an unhealthy degree for subsistence on the soil, and pasture could only support a much smaller population than tillage. Several laws had already been passed, chiefly in periods of great distress, for the encouragement of tillage, but most of them were perfectly inefficient. English influence dominated in Irish legislation, and would suffer no measure that could interfere with the English corn trade, and Irish landlords, for the reasons I have mentioned, had a general leaning towards pasture. Some bounties on exportation were granted in 1707, but they were far smaller than those in England, and they only came into operation when the price had sunk to a level which it scarcely ever reached. They were slightly increased in 1756, in 1765, and in 1774, but were still too low to have any considerable effect. The Act of 1729, making it compulsory to till five acres in every hundred, was little more than a dead

letter, and no great result can have followed from the Act of 1765, which offered premiums to the landlords and farmers in each county who had the largest quantities of corn on stands four feet high, and with flagstones at the top. Some considerable effect in stimulating tillage is, however, said to have been produced by those curious Acts which offered bounties on the inland carriage, and a few years later on the carriage, by the coast, of corn to Dublin; and under these Acts, 882,149*l.* was paid in bounties between 1762 and 1784.[1] But the great and decisive impulse towards tillage in Ireland was not produced until the memorable law of Foster, which was modelled on the English corn laws, as they had existed since the Revolution. It granted a bounty of 3*s.* 4*d.* a barrel on the export of wheat as long as the home price was not above 27*s.* a barrel; and other very considerable bounties on the exportation of flour, barley, rye, oats, and peas; and it at the same time laid a duty of 10*s.* a barrel on imported wheat when the home price was under 30*s.*; and a number of other duties, varying according to the home price, on the importation of the other articles that have been mentioned.[2]

As I have already observed, the value of corn bounties was one of the points on which the opinions of the eighteenth century differed most widely from those of our own generation. In Ireland it was the almost unanimous belief of all the most competent authorities towards the close of the century, that the corn bounties of Foster had proved an inestimable benefit to the nation. Newenham, who of all writers has most fully examined the economical condition of Ireland in the period we are considering, described Foster's Act as incomparably the most beneficent Irish measure of the eighteenth century, and as especially, and in the highest degree, beneficial to the small farmers and labourers. From that time, he maintains, acute distress in Ireland ceased;[3] manufactures flourished in consequence of increased profits in agriculture; and while popu-

[1] Newenham's *View of the Natural, Political, and Commercial Circumstances of Ireland* (1809). This valuable book contains the fullest account I know, of the corn legislation in Ireland.

[2] 23 & 24 Geo. III. c. 19. This is a very long and complicated Act. The reader may find a tolerable abstract of its provisions in Newenham, pp. 213, 214.

[3] P. 143.

lation rapidly augmented, the well-being of all classes steadily rose.[1] These views appear to have been very generally held, and the corn bounties received the warm and almost unanimous approbation of Parliament. It is impossible, indeed, to question the magnitude of the change that followed them. Vast pasture lands were rapidly broken up into small tillage farms; corn mills were erected in every quarter of the land, and a great corn trade was produced. The quantity of corn, meal, and flour exported in twelve years after the passing of the Act exceeded that which was exported in the eighty-four years that preceded it. Its value in ten years after 1785 was about four millions and a quarter.[2] The large number of farmers who held leases for life or for a considerable period, that had not yet expired, made great and sudden gains, and there was a rapid rise in the rental of land. Newenham, writing in 1808, expressed his belief 'that since the year 1782 the rent of land, which a short time before that year had begun to fall in many places, has been much more than doubled in all parts of Ireland one with another, more than trebled in many; and that the greatest rise has been in those counties where tillage has been most pursued;' while the average price of agricultural labour, which was only $6\frac{1}{2}d.$ when Arthur Young visited Ireland, had risen in the next thirty years to $10\frac{1}{2}d.$ Foster's Act, he says, 'may fairly be considered as the great primary cause of the unprecedented increase of wages that has taken place in Ireland since the year 1778.'[3]

Modern economists of the school of Adam Smith, will probably refuse to attribute to the corn bounties the undoubted progress and prosperity of Irish agriculture in the last sixteen years of the century, and will point to other causes which made tillage at that time unusually profitable. It may, however, I think, be truly claimed for Foster's Act, that in a country where

[1] See the very elaborate examination of the subject in Newenham's *View of the Circumstances of Ireland*, and in the same writer's work on *The Population of Ireland*, pp. 44–50. See, too, Crumpe's *Essay on the Employment of the People* (1793), pp. 260–272; Mullala's *View of Irish Affairs since the Revolution*, ii. 128–131. Both Newenham and Crumpe argue elaborately against the views of Adam Smith on the subject. One of the very few instances of a contemporary unfavourable view of the corn bounties in Ireland, will be found in a memorial of Rich. Burke to Dundas. Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 46–57. The writer, however, admits that the corn trade created by the bounties, was at first very lucrative.

[2] Newenham's *Circumstances of Ireland*, pp. 215, 216.

[3] Ibid. pp 230, 231.

there was very little capital and enterprise, it turned agriculture decisively and rapidly in this profitable direction. It was enacted at the time when the growth of the manufacturing population in England had begun to press heavily on the nation's means of subsistence. England ceased to be a wheat-exporting country. Her vast market was thrown open to Irish corn, and a few years later the great French War raised the price of wheat almost to a famine rate and made the profits of corn culture proportionately large.

It is quite true that a great and sudden increase of prosperity is never likely to be a permanent benefit to an improvident and uneducated people. The corn bounties appear to have contributed largely to that excessive subdivision of farms which became ultimately so disastrous; to modes of cultivation which, in order to obtain large and speedy returns, exhausted and impoverished the soil; to an increase of population out of all proportion to the permanent resources of the country.[1] The artificial system which turned into a wheat-growing country a land which nature had intended for pasture was necessarily transient, and with the great fall of prices that followed the peace and with the subsequent adoption by England of the policy of Free Trade the whole economical condition of Ireland was again changed. But during the closing years of the eighteenth century, legislation and circumstances had undoubtedly combined to give an immense impulse to agriculture, and on agriculture more than on any other single influence the prosperity of Ireland depended.

These results, however, were not immediately attained, and the rejection of the protecting duties in 1784 at first produced considerable disturbances. Rutland had soon to report a long series of outrages in the metropolis of the most dangerous kind. The soldiers were more than once called in to repress them, and they became the objects of fierce popular animosity. Several were brutally houghed by butchers in the streets, and the crime assumed such dimensions that a special Act was passed to make the offence capital, and to throw the support of the wounded soldiers on the district if the culprit was not

[1] See the powerful statement of the case against corn bounties in M'Culloch's *Account of the British Empire*, i. 438, 439, 531, 532.

detected.[1] Many tradesmen or artisans, who had imported English goods, or worked at low wages or in branches of manufacture to which they had not been bred, or who had come up from the country to work in Dublin when Dublin workmen were on strike, were tarred and feathered after the American fashion or otherwise ill-used. On one occasion a man, who had been concerned in some of these outrages, being publicly whipped, the mob attacked the soldiers on guard, who fired, killed one man, and wounded several others. On another a threatening mob burst into the gallery of the House of Commons, and it was necessary to call in soldiers to eject them. On a third the Duke of Rutland was hooted in a theatre. A paving Act, which was supposed to press heavily on the poorer ratepayers, was the cause, or, as the Government believed, the pretext, of new disturbances. Houses were attacked, members of Parliament were insulted, threatening letters became very common, and a press of the most savage and seditious nature had arisen. One paper, called 'The Volunteer's Journal,' was especially conspicuous for its scarcely disguised advocacy of assassination, and three men were actually arrested on a charge of being concerned in a conspiracy for assassinating seven members of Parliament, who were conspicuous in opposing protecting duties. With inefficient watchmen, timid magistrates, and a fierce mob, these outrages passed almost unpunished. There were vague rumours, resting on no real evidence, that French influence was concerned in them, and that officers of the Irish brigade in the French service had secretly come over to Ireland. It was, however, the firm conviction of the Lord-Lieutenant that some of the 'master manufacturers' were at the bottom of the outrages, and that considerable sums had been subscribed to foster them.[2]

[1] 23 & 24 Geo. III. c. 56.

[2] Feb. 26, April 12, 1784, Rutland to Sydney (secret and confidential). Next day Orde wrote, 'We are really in a very disagreeable situation in respect to internal disorder. These accursed manufacturers, pent up in a vile suburb of the city, are brooding mischief upon the instigation, no doubt, of more considerable persons among the weavers. Their machinations are the more alarming, because there is no doubt of their design to commit private assassination. Every discovery we make tends to confirm it, and the *glorious* idea is kept alive by the encouragements of the newspapers and the pulpits. . . . It is a damnable scene, and I most cordially detest it.' Orde to Nepean, April 13, 1784. There are several other letters on the subject, written in the spring and summer of 1784. See, too, *Irish Parl. Deb.* ii. 419–421, iii. 147–158.

They appear to have been almost exclusively confined to Dublin. In April, Rutland, while describing their magnitude, added, 'I have the satisfaction at the same time to find that the country is in a perfect state of quiet. The judges have finished their circuits, and at no place whatsoever did the grand juries show any spirit of discontent or any attempt at innovation. I hear of violence nowhere but in the metropolis.'[1] Even in Dublin the disturbances, though for a time very serious, in a few months subsided, and a Press Bill, which was introduced by Foster, did much to check them. It provided that the true names of every newspaper proprietor must be registered; made receiving or offering money for printing or forbearing to print libels a high misdemeanour, and prevented the sale of unstamped papers in the streets.[2] Towards the close of the year, however, the Whiteboy disturbances broke out again with great violence in the county Kilkenny and spread widely over several counties.

An incident, which occurred in Dublin in the spring of 1784, added seriously to the alarm. The 'Liberty' corps of the volunteers—so called because it was recruited in the Earl of Meath's liberties, where the woollen manufacturers chiefly dwelt—thought fit without consulting any other volunteers to advertise for recruits, and enlisted about two hundred of the lowest class, who were chiefly Roman Catholics. Such a proceeding was wholly contrary to the wishes of Charlemont, to the general custom of the volunteers, and to the law which forbade Catholics to carry arms without licence, and at a time when the spirit of outrage was so rife in Dublin it was peculiarly dangerous. The other corps of the volunteers marked their disapprobation by refusing to join the Liberty corps at their exercises; but neither the Government nor the leaders of the volunteers ventured to take the decisive step of disarming the new recruits, and the example of Catholic enlistment began to spread.[3]

[1] Rutland to Sydney, April 28, 1784.

[2] 23 & 24 Geo. III. c. 28; *Irish Parl. Deb.* iii. 154.

[3] 'I was satisfied that the old corps, who are very completely appointed and pique themselves as gentlemen upon their manners and appearance, and upon being men in substantial circumstances, would not submit to unite with the meanest and poorest rank; and I expected that the expense of clothing and arming the people, the encouragement the plan must give to idleness, and the dislike of other corps to the

The change, indeed, which was now taking place in the character of the volunteer body, was especially alarming. The original volunteers had consisted of the flower of the Protestant yeomanry, commanded by the gentry of Ireland, and in addition to their services in securing the country from invasion in a time of great national peril, they had undertaken to preserve its internal peace, and had discharged with admirable efficiency the functions of a great police force. But after the signature of peace, and, again, after the dissolution of the Volunteer Convention, a great portion of the more respectable men connected with the movement considered their work done and retired from the ranks, and they were being replaced by another and wholly different class. The taste for combining, arming, and drilling had spread, and had descended to the lower strata of society. Demagogues had arisen who sought by arming and organising volunteers to win political power, and who gathered around them men who desired for very doubtful purposes to obtain arms. Grattan, who at all times dreaded and detested anything that withdrew political movements in Ireland from the control and guidance of the gentry, was one of the first to denounce the change. 'I would now draw the attention of the House,' he said, 'to the alarming measure of drilling the lowest classes of the populace. . . . The old, the original, volunteers had become respectable because they represented the property of the nation, but attempts had been made to arm the poverty of the kingdom. They had originally been the armed property of Ireland. Were they to become the armed beggary?' 'The populace,' he added, 'differ much and should be clearly distinguished from the people,' and he spoke of the capital that has been drained, the manufacturers who have been deterred, the character of the nation that has been sunk by indiscriminate arming, and by the establishment of representative bodies unconnected with Parliament.[1]

The debates of this year furnish many illustrations of the growing evil. One speaker complained that men whom the old volunteers emphatically repudiated, and with whom they

measure, would frustrate the attempt. The event hitherto has in a great degree justified my expectations.' Rutland to Sydney, May 19, 24, 1784.

[1] *Irish. Parl. Deb.* iv. 41, 42. See, too, pp. 237, 238.

refused in any way to associate, 'men of no property and of every persuasion,' were of their own authority forming themselves into separate armed corps. In Kerry, men calling themselves volunteers beat off one of his Majesty's sloops of war with their small arms, and in many places men assuming the same name were in receipt of daily pay. Another speaker stated that in some of the recent Dublin riots volunteers had remained absolutely passive, and refused when summoned to assist the civil power. A third had seen two sergeants, in back parts of Dublin, drilling two parties of seventy or eighty ragged and dangerous-looking ruffians, and when he accosted them he found that they were acting entirely on their own authority, being determined, as they told him, that when a rebellion or disturbance broke out, they would have armed men at their command. Fitzgibbon, who was now Attorney-General, said that the great majority of the original volunteers had hung up their arms and retired to cultivate the arts of peace, and that their places were often taken by men of the worst character. He asserted that one corps, called the 'Sons of the Shamrock,' had voted every Frenchman of character an honorary member, and that he had himself seen resolutions inviting the French to Ireland, and enthusiastic eulogies of Lewis XVI. It was reported that officers of the Irish brigade in the French service had come over to engage volunteers. The law forbidding Catholics to carry arms without licence had hitherto been enforced, and it was regarded even by the Catholic gentry as of vital importance to the peace of the country, for while the more respectable Catholics readily obtained licences, it gave the Government the power of restraining, in a very lawless and turbulent country, the great masses of the rabble from the possession of arms. But now, under the colour of volunteering, and in direct defiance, not only of the letter of the law, but also of the wishes of the commander of the volunteers, an extensive and indiscriminate arming of Catholics was going on, and the Lord-Lieutenant complained that great quantities of arms were being scattered through the very lowest section of the population.[1] In Ulster, it is true, the volunteers retained much of their

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iv. 225, 227, 279, 280, 294. See, too, the letters of Rutland and Orde during the latter half of 1784.

primitive character, and Charlemont for many years presided at their annual reviews; but in other parts of the country, and especially in Dublin, the change was very marked. In a letter written in 1793, Charlemont, while deploring the shameful and utter degradation of the Dublin volunteers, incidentally mentioned that though he was still their nominal commander, they had, for many years past, in no one instance asked his advice, nor had they ever taken it when it was offered.[1]

The disquiet caused by these things was very evident. In the House it was frequently expressed, and when a partisan of the volunteers recalled the former votes of thanks to the volunteers, and proposed another similar vote, Gardiner moved an amendment, which was strongly supported by Grattan and carried by a great majority, expressing high approbation of those who since the conclusion of the war had retired to cultivate the blessing of peace.[2] The letters of the Lord-Lieutenant for some time showed the anxiety with which he regarded the continuance of the volunteer movement and especially the arming of Catholics. The creation of a purely Protestant militia was the favourite remedy, but both the English and Irish Governments agreed that an attempt to disarm or even to prohibit the volunteers would be extremely dangerous, and that it was best to trust to the probability that in times of peace they would dwindle away.[3] The prevision was on the whole justified; in a few years complaints on the subject almost ceased; but a portion of the volunteers were still in arms when the French Revolution called all the disaffected elements in Ireland into activity.

By far the greater part of the disturbances of 1784 and 1785 were probably due to no deeper cause than commercial depression acting upon a very riotous population, and with the return of prosperity they gradually ceased; but there was a real and dangerous element of political agitation mixing with the social disquietude. The decisive rejection of Flood's Reform Bill, in spite of the many petitions in its favour, and the refusal of the

[1] Charlemont to Haliday, Feb. 26, 1793.

[2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iv. 266–297. Orde to Nepean, Feb. 19, 1785.

[3] See Rutland to Sydney, Oct. 25, 1784; English instructions to Rutland, Jan. 11, 1785; Sydney to Rutland, Jan. 7, 1786; Rutland to Sydney, Feb. 27, 1786.

House of Commons to impose protective duties stimulated political agitation, and the question of the Catholic franchise now began to rise into prominence. Several of the opponents of Flood's Reform Bill had made the omission of the Roman Catholics an argument against it;[1] and some of its supporters accused the Government of raising the Catholic question in order to divide and weaken the reformers.[2] On the other hand a democratic party had arisen, who, following the advice of the Bishop of Derry, contended that the best way of breaking down the power of the aristocracy and carrying parliamentary reform was to offer the franchise to the Catholics, and thus enlist the great body of the nation in the agitation. Dr. Richard Price the eminent Nonconformist minister who was so prominent among the reformers in England, wrote to the volunteers, 'I cannot help wishing that the right of voting could be extended to papists of property in common with Protestants;' and Todd Jones, one of the members for Lisburne, published a letter to his constituents strongly advocating the measure. In July 1784 an address in this sense was presented to Lord Charlemont by the Ulster volunteers who were reviewed at Belfast, but Charlemont in his reply, while reiterating his adhesion to parliamentary reform, pronounced himself strongly against Catholic suffrage.[3]

In Dublin a small knot of violent and revolutionary reformers, chiefly of the shopkeeper class, had arisen, and some of them were members of the Corporation. Napper Tandy, the son of an ironmonger in the city, was the most conspicuous, and he afterwards rose to great notoriety. By the exertions of this party, meetings in favour of reform were held in Dublin. A permanent committee was created, and in June 1784 this committee invited the sheriffs of the different counties to call meetings for the purpose of electing delegates to meet in Dublin in the ensuing October. This was an attempt to revive in another form the convention of the previous year, with this great distinction, that it was to have no connection with any armed force,

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iii. 54, 65, 69.

[2] See a pamphlet by Sir Lucius O'Brien, called *A Gleam of Comfort to this distracted Empire* (London, 1785).

[3] Grattan's *Life*, iii. 228–230. Rutland, in relating this, says that Charlemont's answer 'brought upon him the most virulent abuse in the public prints, but it is no more than the lot of every man, who differs in the smallest degree from whatever may be the popular cry of the moment.' To Sydney, July 21, 1784.

but was to be a true representative of the Irish Protestants. In many quarters the idea was accepted with alacrity, and the Government did not distinctly challenge the legality of the congress; but Fitzgibbon, by a strained and unusual construction of law, treated the conduct of the high sheriff of the county of Dublin, in summoning a meeting to elect delegates, as a contempt of the Court of King's Bench; proceeded against him before that court by the method of 'attachment,' and without the intervention of a jury caused him to be condemned to a small fine. The legality of this proceeding was much disputed by Flood, and by lawyers in the Parliaments both of England and Ireland. Erskine was consulted on the subject, and he wrote a remarkable letter in which he asserted that the conduct of the King's Bench judges was such a gross and daring usurpation that it would justify their impeachment, and that the precedent, if acquiesced in, would be in the highest degree fatal to liberty in both countries.[1]

The feeling in favour of reform continued to be very strong throughout the country, and it was accompanied with great irritation against the majority in Parliament. The prediction of Flood that without a reform of Parliament there was no security for the stability of the present Constitution, and that a corrupt majority might one day overturn it, had sunk deeply in the popular mind, and petitions to the King poured in from many quarters, describing the House of Commons as having wholly lost the confidence of the nation and fallen completely into the hands of a corrupt oligarchy. One petition which came from Belfast[2] attracted special notice from its openly revolutionary character. It stated that the majority was 'illegally returned by the mandates of Lords of Parliament and a few great Commoners, either for indigent boroughs where scarcely any inhabitants exist or for considerable towns where the elective franchise is unjustly confined to a few . . . that the House of Commons

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iii. 221–226. I am quite incompetent to give any opinion on the subject. Pitt in a private letter to Orde (Jan. 12, 1785) writes, 'I have had some conversation with your Attorney-General on the subject of the attachments, who defends his cause very ably and puts it in the best light it can admit of. Still, I think it a matter of great delicacy and caution, and enough has been done already.'—Privately printed *Correspondence of Pitt and Rutland*.

[2] July 1784.

is not the representative of a nation, but of mean and venal boroughs . . . that the price of a seat in Parliament is as well ascertained as that of the cattle of the fields,' and that although the united voice of the nation had been raised in favour of a substantial reform, yet 'the abuse lying in the very frame and disposition of Parliament itself, the weight of corruption crushed with ignominy and contempt the temperate petitions of the people.' Under these circumstances, said the petitioners, the repeated abuses and perversion of the representative trust amounted to a virtual abdication and forfeiture in the trustees, and they had summoned 'a civil convention of representatives to be freely chosen by every county and city and great town in Ireland . . . with authority to determine in the name of the collective body on such measures as are most likely to re-establish the Constitution on a pure and permanent basis.' They accordingly asked the King to dissolve the Parliament and 'to give efficacy to the determination of the convention of actual delegates, either by issuing writs agreeably to such plan of reform as shall by them be deemed adequate, or by co-operating with them in other steps for restoring the Constitution.'

In such language it is easy to recognise the strong democratic fervour which was arising in the North, but the gentry of Ireland had in general no sympathy with such views, and although, in spite of all obstacles, the congress met in October 1784, and again in the following January, it proved to be a body of very little importance. Nearly all the more important persons either openly discountenanced it or only consented to be elected in order to keep out more dangerous men. Sir Edward Newenham, a warm partisan of Flood, a strong advocate of parliamentary reform, and also a strong opponent of Catholic suffrage, seems to have been the most prominent of its active members. The Bishop of Derry did not attend. Flood only appeared once. The Catholic question speedily divided the members, and little resulted from the congress except some declamatory addresses in favour of parliamentary reform which had very little effect upon opinion.

It is a question of much difficulty whether the Catholics themselves took any considerable part in these agitations. For a long period an almost death-like torpor hung over the

body, and though they formed the great majority of the Irish people they hardly counted even in movements of opinion. Even when they were enrolled in volunteer corps there were no traces of Catholic leaders. There was, it is true, still a Catholic committee which watched over Catholic interests; Lord Kenmare and a few other leading Catholics were in frequent communication with the Government; two or three Catholic bishops at this time did good service in repressing Whiteboyism, and Dr. Troy, who was then Bishop of Ossory, received the warm thanks of the Lord-Lieutenant,[1] but for the most part the Catholics stood wholly apart from political agitation. The well-known Father O'Leary indeed had one day visited the Volunteer Convention in 1783 and had been received with presented arms and enthusiastic applause, and one of the corps had even given him the honorary dignity of their chaplain.[2] In the same Convention when the Bishop of Derry brought forward the question of Catholic suffrage a strange and very scandalous episode occurred. Sir Boyle Roche, a member of Parliament who was well known for his buffoonery, but who was also a prominent and a shrewd debater, closely connected with the Government and chamberlain at the Castle, rose and asserted that Lord Kenmare having heard that the question was about to be raised had sent through him a message explicitly disavowing on the part of the Catholics any wish to take part in elections. Such a communication at such a time had naturally great weight, but it was speedily followed by a resolution from the Catholic Committee declaring that it was totally unknown to them, and a few days later by a letter from Lord Kenmare stating that no such message had been sent, and that the use of his name was entirely unauthorised. Sir Boyle Roche afterwards explained that he considered the conduct of the Bishop and his associates so dangerous that 'the crisis had arrived in which Lord Kenmare and the heads of the Catholic body should step forth to disavow those wild projects and to profess their attachment to the lawful powers.' Unfortunately Lord Kenmare and most of the other leading Catholics were at this time far from Dublin, and therefore, 'authorised only by a knowledge of the sentiments of the persons in question,' he considered himself justified in inventing the

[1] Plowden, ii. 107, 108. [2] England's *Life of O'Leary*, p. 105.

message. It is a strange illustration of the standard of political honour prevailing in Ireland that a man who, by his own confession, had acted in this manner continued to be connected with the Government and a popular speaker in the House of Commons.[1]

It was true, however, that Lord Kenmare and several other prominent Catholics were not favourable to the Convention, that their influence was uniformly exerted against political agitation, and that on this ground many of their co-religionists were beginning to desert them.[2] The question of giving votes to the Catholics was first raised with effect by an Anglican bishop and by some Presbyterian agitators, but there is reason to believe that in Dublin Catholics were being slowly drawn into the vortex. A few years later, as we shall see, they were numerous among the followers of Napper Tandy, and as early as 1784 the Irish Government attributed most of the disturbances to French instigation, and a large proportion of the seditious writing to Popish priests.[3] It is now impossible to ascertain how far such suspicions were justified. For some months a panic prevailed which made men very credulous. A thousand rumours, as the Chief Secretary himself said, filled the air. False testimony was very common. None of the reports that reached the Castle appear to have been tested in the law courts, and in a short time all serious alarm had passed away. It is, however,

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iii. 119–122.

[2] Wyse's *History of the Catholic Association*, i. 103.

[3] 'I have discovered a channel by which I hope to get to the bottom of all the plots and machinations which are contriving in this metropolis. As I always expected, the disturbances which have been agitated have all derived their source from French influence. There is a meeting in which two men named Napper Tandy and John Binney, together with others who style themselves free citizens, assemble. They drink the French King on their knees, and their declared purpose is a separation from England and the establishment of the Roman Catholic religion. At their meetings an avowed French agent constantly attends, who is no other than the person in whose favour the French ambassador desired Lord Carmarthen to write to me a formal introduction. . . . One of this meeting, alarmed at the dangerous extent of their schemes, has confessed, and has engaged to discover to me the whole intentions of this profligate and unprincipled combination.' Rutland to Sydney (most secret), Aug. 26, 1784. 'We are now very certain that most of the abominable letters and paragraphs in the public papers are written by popish priests. We shall, I really believe, be very soon able to get sufficient evidence which we may make use of, to apprehend and arrest them. We shall be assisted by the principal persons, especially by the titular prelates, who are earnest to express and manifest their reprobation of such excesses.' Orde to Nepean (most private), April 30, 1784.

antecedently probable that the contagion of political agitation was not unfelt in the Catholic body, and that they were not insensible to the overtures of the democratic party. The Government at least thought so, and they sent over two or three spies to Ireland to ascertain the secret sentiments of the Catholics. There is grave reason to believe that among these spies was a man whose literary and social gifts had given him a foremost place among the Irish Catholics and whose character ranked very high among his contemporaries. Father O'Leary, whose brilliant pen had already been employed to vindicate both the loyalty and the faith of the Catholics and to induce them to remain attached to the law, appears to have consented for money to discharge an ignominious office for a Government which distrusted and despised him.[1]

It may, however, I think, be confidently stated that the suspicion of the Government that French influence was at the bottom of the disturbances in Ireland, and that an agent connected with the French ambassador was directing them, was without foundation. For several years, it is true, foreign statesmen had given some slight and intermittent attention to Irish affairs. We have already seen this in the case of

[1] Sept. 4, 1784, Sydney writes to Rutland, 'O'Leary has been talked to by Mr. Nepean, and he is willing to undertake what is wished for 100*l.* a year which has been granted him.' On Sept. 8 Orde writes to Nepean thanking him for sending over a spy or detective named Parker, and adds, 'I am very glad also that you have settled matters with O'Leary, who can get at the bottom of all secrets in which the Catholics are concerned, and they are certainly the chief promoters of our present disquietude. He must, however, be cautiously trusted, for he is a priest, and if not too much addicted to the general vice of his brethren here, he is at least well acquainted with the art of raising alarms for the purpose of claiming a merit in doing them away.' On Sept. 23 he writes, 'We are about to make trial of O'Leary's sermons and of Parker's rhapsodies. They may be both in their different callings of very great use. The former, if we can depend upon him, has it in his power to discover to us the real designs of the Catholics, from which quarter, after all, the real mischief is to spring. The other can scrape an acquaintance with the great leaders of sedition, particularly Napper Tandy, and perhaps by that means may dive to the bottom of his secrets.' On Oct. 17 he writes to Nepean, alluding to some rumour about O'Leary which is not stated, 'Del Campo's connection with O'Leary, or rather O'Leary's with him, may have given rise to all the report, but after all I think it right to be very watchful over the priest and wish you to be so over the minister. They are all of them designing knaves.' The Christian name of this O'Leary is nowhere given, nor is anything said about his being a monk; and as the surname is a very common one, it is possible that the person referred to may not have been the well-known writer. Considering, however, the important position and connections attributed to this O'Leary, the conjecture is, I fear, an improbable one.

Vergennes,[1] and in the correspondence of Lord Charlemont there is a curious letter from St. Petersburg written by Lord Carysfort complaining of the evil effects which the Volunteer Convention and the growing suspicion on the Continent that Ireland was about to follow the example of America were likely to have on English influence and on English commercial negotiations.[2] But the very full and confidential correspondence which Count d'Adhémar, the French ambassador at London, carried on at this time with his Government, sufficiently shows that he had no agent employed in Ireland and little or no knowledge of Irish affairs which might not have been derived from the public newspapers and from the current political gossip of London. Though D'Adhémar believed firmly in the high character and sincerely pacific disposition of Pitt, he was persuaded that peace with France would only continue as long as England was too weak for war. The nation, he said, ulcerated by the humiliation of the last war, was implacably hostile, and would soon force its Government into a renewed struggle. In the interval French influence should be employed to injure England wherever she was weak, and the two quarters in which it might be most profitably exerted, were India and America. In April 1784 he first called attention to affairs of Ireland. He mentions the great excitement produced in the English as well as the Irish newspapers by Foster's Press Bill; the skill with which Fox had already made use of it; the probability that it would assist him in the Westminster election which was now pending. He afterwards reports that the Viceroy had been attacked on account of the Press Bill; that the Irish corporations were protesting against it; that non-importation agreements were multiplying; that the affairs of Ireland were taking a very serious turn. The Government, he believed, were anxious to disavow Foster, and a courier had started for Ireland for the purpose of suspending the operation of the Bill. He knew, from a good source, that ministers had desired to arrest the Bishop of Derry, but were prevented by a division in the Council. The Duke of Rutland was anxious to resign, and the Duchess had lately written to a lady friend in

[1] Vol. iv. pp. 491, 492.

[2] Lord Carysfort to Charlemont, Sept. 10, 1784. *Charlemont Papers.*

England, expressing her anxiety about the incapacity of her husband and the frightful growth of the spirit of insurrection. There had been a meeting at the Dublin Town Hall, presided over by the municipal officers, at which the corrupt constitution of Parliament was unanimously denounced. 'There is a military association which has been deliberating about presenting an address to Lewis XVI., the defender of the rights of the human race.' From the accounts of the volunteer reviews it appeared to the ambassador, that more than 70,000 men were under arms. 'Even if no other advantage,' he added, 'came from threatening the British coast, the calling this great force under arms would have been a great one.'[1]

The tension, however, soon passed, and several years elapsed before French ministers were seriously occupied with Ireland. The next few years of Irish history were quiet and uneventful, and although no great reform was effected, the growing prosperity of the country was very perceptible. The House of Commons gave the Government little or no trouble, and whatever agitations or extreme views may have been advocated beyond its walls, the most cautious conservative could hardly accuse it of any tendency to insubordination or violence. It consisted almost entirely of landlords, lawyers, and placemen. Its more important discussions show a great deal of oratorical and debating talent, much knowledge of the country and considerable administrative power; it was ardently and unanimously attached to the Crown and the connection, and the accumulation of borough interests at the disposal of the Treasury, and the habitual custom of 'supporting the King's Government,' gave the Government on nearly all questions an overwhelming strength. The majority had certainly no desire to carry any measure of reform which would alter their own very secure and agreeable position, or expose them to the vicissitudes of popular contests, but the influence of the Government was so overwhelming that even in this direction much might have been done by Government initiative, and it is remarkable that in all the letters of the Irish Government opposing parliamentary reform, nothing is said of the impracticability of carrying it. On

[1] Letters of Count d'Adhémar, April 23, May 7, June 18, Aug. 3, 1784, French Foreign Office.

the whole, it would be difficult to find a legislative body which was less troublesome to the Executive. There was one subject and only one upon which it was recalcitrant. It was jealous to the very highest degree of its own position as an independent Legislature, and any measure which appeared even remotely designed to restrict its powers and to make it subordinate to the British Parliament, produced a sudden and immediate revolt.

The prosperity of the country was advancing, and the revenue was rising, but the expenses of the Government still outstripped its income, and there were loud complaints of growing extravagance. Many things had indeed recently conspired to increase the national expenditure. Free trade opening out vast markets for Irish products, had induced Parliament to give larger bounties for the purpose of stimulating native manufactures. The erection of a magnificent custom-house; great works of inland navigation; an augmentation of the salaries of the judges in 1781; additional revenue officers required by an expanding trade; additional officials needed for the New National Bank, fell heavily on the finances. In 1783 an independent member proposed that the salary of the Lord-Lieutenant should be raised from 16,000*l.*, at which it had been fixed twenty-two years before, to 20,000*l.* It was argued that the expense of the office was notoriously greater than its salary; that the constant residence of the Lord-Lieutenant, the annual sessions of Parliament, and the increased cost of living had largely augmented it, and that it was not in accordance with the dignity of the nation, that an English nobleman should be obliged to appropriate part of his private fortune to support the position of Viceroy of Ireland. The augmentation was refused by Lord Northington, but accepted by his successor, and it was speedily followed by the addition of 2,000*l.* a year to the salary of the Chief Secretary. Strong objections were made to the latter proposal, and it appears to have been carried mainly on account of a speech of the Attorney-General, who promised that it would put an end to the scandalous system of granting great Irish offices for life to retiring Chief Secretaries. Some of the chief offices in the country had been thus bestowed, and with the single exception of Sir John Blaquiere all those who held them lived

habitually in England.[1] In 1784 three new judges were appointed, and the introduction of annual sessions of Parliament involved some necessary and legitimate expenditure, and probably contributed not a little both to parliamentary prodigality and Government corruption. 'The contention for parliamentary favour,' it was said, 'became in a manner perpetual. The doors of the temple were never shut,'[2] and the increased importance of the House of Commons made Government more and more desirous of securing by pensions and sinecures an overwhelming parliamentary influence.

There was a strong desire to bring back the great Irish offices to the country. In the beginning of the reign of George II. it was noticed that among the habitual absentees were officers of the Irish Post Office, whose salaries amounted to 6,000*l.* a year; the Master of the Ordnance; the Master of the Rolls; the Lord Treasurer and the three Vice-Treasurers; the four Commissioners of the Revenue; the Secretary of State; the Clerks of the Crown for Leinster, Ulster, and Munster; the Master of the Revels, and even the Secretary of the Lord-Lieutenant.[3] One of the most scandalous Irish measures in the early years of George III. had been the grant of the Irish Chancellorship of the Exchequer for life, to Single Speech Hamilton, in 1763. He was allowed to treat it as an absolute sinecure, and the management of Irish finances was thrown for many years upon the Attorney-General, a busy lawyer who had no special knowledge of the subject. Although the value of the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer was only 1,800*l.* a year, the Government after a long negotiation consented in 1784 to buy it back from Hamilton by the grant of a life pension on Ireland of 2,500*l.* a year, with the power to sell his pension.[4]

The office, however, was admirably bestowed, being granted to John Foster, one of the very foremost figures in the Irish Parliament. He was the son of that Chief Baron Foster whom Arthur Young had described as one of the ablest men, and one of the best and most improving landlords in Ireland, and he had already taken the leading part in the foundation of the

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* ii. 202–204.
[2] Ibid. vi. 73, vii. 137, 138.
[3] Newenham's *State of Ireland*, p. 110.
[4] *Irish Parl. Deb.* ii. 405, v. 145, viii. 365, ix. 258, 259.

National Bank. He was also the author of some measures which had been extremely successful in encouraging the linen trade, as well as of the corn bounties which we have already considered. That excellent judge, Woodfall, described him as 'one of the readiest and most clear-headed men of business' he had ever met with,[1] and no one, I think, can read his speeches without being struck with the singular ability and the singular knowledge they display. His strong opposition to protecting duties; his Press Bill, and the prominent and very able part which he took in defence of the commercial propositions of 1785, made him for a time unpopular in Dublin; but his high character and his great financial knowledge were universally recognised. In the autumn of 1785, when Pery retired from the Chair which he had occupied for more than fourteen years, Foster was unanimously elected Speaker, and he held that position till the Union. He still, however, occasionally contributed some admirable speeches to the debates. He was succeeded as Chancellor of the Exchequer by Sir John Parnell.

Several other great offices were still held by absentees,[2] but none of them were as important as the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. In 1784, there was a curious discussion on the habitual absence of the Master of the Rolls, and it was defended by the Attorney-General Fitzgibbon, on the very grotesque ground that it was conducive to the good administration of justice. 'If the Master of the Rolls,' he said, 'was compelled to become a resident and efficient officer, it would render the business of the Court of Chancery more prolix and tedious than it is at present.' There would be another appeal in Chancery suits, and 'this would be attended with delay and inconvenience to suitors, and would give great additional reason to curse the law's delay.'[3] The office was held by Rigby, who had no other connection with Ireland since he had ceased to be Chief Secretary in the first year of the reign. On his death in 1788, it was brought back to Ireland, but it was still treated as a mere lucrative sinecure and was given to the Duke of Leinster.[4]

[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, i. 80.

[2] See *Irish Parl. Deb.* ii. 203.

[3] Ibid. iii. 87. The same debate brought out some curious illustrations of the manner in which the Court of Chancery was conducted in Ireland.

[4] Sydney to Buckingham, June 10, 1788.

This abuse at last gradually ceased. Some offices were bought back by pensions, though often on most extravagant terms.[1] Others fell in by death; the feeling on the subject in Parliament was generally strong enough to prevent fresh appointments to absentees, and the Government in Ireland desired to employ all their patronage at home in resisting the movement for a parliamentary reform.

The position of the English Government on the question of reform varied at different times, but on the whole English statesmen were usually considerably more liberal than the Administration in Ireland. Pitt came to power with the reputation of a great parliamentary reformer, and he was at first seriously desirous of carrying out his early pledges and of fulfilling the programme of his illustrious father. If reform was needed anywhere, it was needed in Ireland, and if it was carried in one country it was tolerably certain that it would be impossible to resist it in the other. His confidential letters to the Duke of Rutland are preserved, and they show that he was at one period sincerely anxious to reform the Irish Parliament, though he was at this time equally determined not to admit the Catholics to power. 'The line to which my mind at present inclines,' he wrote ('open to whatever new observations or arguments may be suggested to me), is *to give Ireland an almost unlimited communication of commercial advantages*, if we can receive in return some security that *her strength and riches will be our benefit, and that she will contribute from time to time in their increasing proportions to the common exigencies of the Empire; and having by holding out this*, removed, I trust, every temptation to Ireland to consider her interests as separate from England, to be ready, while we discountenance *wild and unconstitutional attempts, which strike at the root of all authority*, to give real efficacy and popularity to the Government by acceding (if such a line can be found) to a *prudent and temperate reform of Parliament*, which may guard against, or gradually cure, *real* defects and mischiefs, may show a sufficient regard to the interests and even prejudices of individuals who are concerned, and may unite the Protestant interest in *excluding the Catholics from any share in the representation* or the government

[1] *Irish Parl Deb.* viii. 69.

of the country.'[1] He begs Rutland to sound the dispositions of Charlemont and the other reformers, and says, 'By all I hear accidentally, the parliamentary reformers are alarmed at the pretensions of the Catholics, and for that very reason would stop very short of the extreme speculative notions of universal suffrage.' 'Let me beseech you,' he adds, 'to recollect that both your character and mine for consistency are at stake unless there are unanswerable proofs that the case of Ireland and England is different; and to recollect also, that however it is our duty to oppose the most determined spirit and firmness to ill-founded clamour or factious pretensions, it is a duty equally indispensable to take care not to struggle but *in a right cause.* 'I am more and more convinced in my own mind every day, that some reform will take place in both countries. Whatever is to be wished (on which, notwithstanding numerous difficulties, I have myself no doubt), it is, I believe, at least certain that if any reform takes place here, the tide will be too strong to be withstood in Ireland.' 'If it be well done, the sooner the better.' 'Should there appear, after a certain time, a prospect that the complete arrangement of commercial questions will be followed by some satisfaction on this essential point of reform, I believe the arms will then drop out of the hands of the volunteers without a struggle.' He only desired that the Irish Government should not commit itself irrevocably to reform 'while the question is undecided in England.'[2]

The Irish Administration, on the other hand, was strongly opposed to any measure of reform. They had got their majority by the small borough system, and they wished to keep it, and opposed a strong passive resistance to every attempt from England to impel them in the direction of reform. The chief governor was naturally surrounded by great borough owners, whose personal interests were bound up with the existing political system, and the spirit both of resistance and of anti-Catholicism was very greatly strengthened when, on the promotion of Yelverton to the Bench in 1783, Fitzgibbon became Attorney-General. This remarkable man, who for the last sixteen years of the century exercised a dominant influence in the Irish

[1] Pitt to Rutland, Oct 7, 1784 (privately printed correspondence). The italics are in the original.

[2] Pitt to Rutland, Oct. 7, Dec. 4, 1784; Jan. 11, 12, 1785.

Government, and who, as Lord Clare, was the ablest, and at the same time the most detested, advocate of the Union, had in 1780 opposed the Declaration of Right moved by Grattan in the House of Commons, but had supported the policy of Grattan in 1782, and had used strong language in censuring some parts of the legislative authority which Great Britain exercised over Ireland.[1] It is very questionable whether he ever really approved of the repeal of Poynings' Law, and his evident leaning towards authority made him distrusted by several leaders of the popular party, but Grattan does not appear to have shared the feeling, and when he was consulted on the subject by Lord Northington, he gave his full sanction to the promotion of Fitzgibbon.[2] For some time there was no breach between them, and in one of his speeches in 1785 Fitzgibbon spoke in high terms of the character and services of Grattan,[3] but the dispute on the commercial propositions appears to have separated them, and Fitzgibbon soon followed the true instincts of his character and his intellect, in opposing an iron will to every kind of reform. In private life he appears to have been an estimable and even amiable man; several acts of generosity are related of him, and the determination with which in spite of a large inherited fortune he pursued his career at the bar, shows the energy and the seriousness of his character. He is said not to have been a great orator, but he was undoubtedly a very ready and skilful debater, a great master of constitutional law, a man who in council had a peculiar gift of

[1] In a remarkable letter to his constituents of the University of Dublin, he said, in 1780, 'I have always been of opinion that the claim of the British Parliament to make laws for this country is a daring usurpation of the rights of a free people, and have uniformly asserted the opinion in public and in private.' He says that although he had opposed the Declaration of Rights when it was first moved, he would now yield his opinion to that of his constituents and support it, but that he could not support a total repeal of Poynings' Law. He adds, 'There is not a doubt in my mind that a perpetual Mutiny Bill lays the foundation of a military despotism in this country; on this principle I will, while I live, make every effort in my power to procure a repeal of it.' O'Flanagan's *Lives of the Chancellors of Ireland*, ii. 166, 167.

[2] See Grattan's *Life*, iii. 134, 200, 201.

[3] 'From the first I have ever reprobated the idea of appealing to the volunteers, though I was confident Ireland was in no danger while they followed the counsel of the man whom I am proud to call my most worthy and honourable friend [Mr. Grattan]; the man to whom this country owes more than, perhaps, any State ever owed to an individual; the man whose wisdom and virtue directed the happy circumstances of the times and the spirit of Irishmen to make us a nation. While the volunteers continued under his influence I feared no evil from them.' *Irish Parl. Deb.* iv. 286.

bending other wills to his own, a man who in many trying periods of popular violence displayed a courage which no danger and no obloquy could disturb. He was, however, arrogant, petulant, and overbearing in the highest degree, delighting in trampling on those whom he disliked, in harsh acts and irritating words, prone on all occasions to strain prerogative and authority to their utmost limits, bitterly hostile to the great majority of his countrymen, and, without being corrupt himself, a most cynical corrupter of others. Curran, both in Parliament and at the bar, had been one of his bitterest opponents, and a duel having on one occasion ensued, a great scandal was created by the slow and deliberate manner in which, contrary to the ordinary rules of duels, Fitzgibbon aimed at his opponent,[1] and when he became Lord Chancellor he was accused of having, by systematic hostility and partiality on the bench, compelled his former adversary to abandon his practice in the court.[2]

As a politician, Fitzgibbon, though his father had been one of the many Catholics who abandoned their faith in order to pursue a legal career, represented in its harshest and most arrogant form the old spirit of Protestant ascendency as it

[1] Phillips' *Life of Curran*; Barrington's *Rise and Fall.*

[2] Phillips' *Life of Curran*, pp. 151, 152. Curran himself long afterwards wrote of this, 'Though I was too strong to be beaten down by any judicial malignity, it was not so with my clients; and my consequent losses in professional income have never been estimated at less, as you must have often heard, than thirty thousand pounds.' A passage from one of Fitzgibbon's speeches in Parliament against Curran may be given as a specimen of the kind of language he was accustomed to employ. 'The politically insane gentleman [Curran] has asserted much, but he only emitted some effusions of the witticisms of fancy. His declamation, indeed, was better calculated for the stage of Sadler's Wells than the floor of a House of Commons. A mountebank with but one half the honourable gentleman's theatrical talent for rant would undoubtedly make his fortune. However, I am somewhat surprised he should entertain such a particular asperity against me, as I never did him any favour. But perhaps the honourable gentleman imagines he may talk himself into consequence. If so, I should be sorry to obstruct his promotion; he is heartily welcome to attack me. One thing, however, I will assure him—that I hold him in so small a degree of estimation either as a man or a lawyer that I shall never hereafter deign to make him any answer.' Grattan's *Life*, iii. 268. The scene is alluded to, but not reported, as being purely personal, in the *Irish Parl. Deb.* v. 472. Woodfall, the famous parliamentary reporter, happened to be in the Irish House of Commons during this scene, and he has given a graphic description of it. *Auckland Correspondence*, i. 78, 79. No one, I think, who follows the reported speeches of Fitzgibbon, can fail to be struck with the extraordinary arrogance they display, and it is said to have been much aggravated by his manner. In Charlemont's *MS. Autobiography* there is an elaborate and exceedingly (I think unduly) unfavourable character of him.

existed when the smoke of the civil wars had scarcely cleared away, and he laughed to scorn all who taught that there could be any peace between the different sections of Irishmen, or that the century which had elapsed since the Revolution had made any real change in the situation of the country. A passage in his great speech in favour of the Union is the key-note of his whole policy. 'What, then,' he asked, 'was the situation of Ireland at the Revolution, and what is it at this day? The whole power and property of the country has been conferred by successive monarchs of England upon an English colony composed of three sets of English adventurers, who poured into this country at the termination of three successive rebellions. Confiscation is their common title, and from their first settlement they have been hemmed in on every side by the old inhabitants of the island, brooding over their discontents in sullen indignation.'[1] In accordance with these views his uniform object was to represent the Protestant community as an English garrison planted in a hostile country, to govern steadily, sternly, and exclusively, with a view to their interests, to resist to the utmost every attempt to relax monopoly, elevate and conciliate the Catholics or draw together the divided sections of Irish life. Even in the days when he professed liberalism, he had endeavoured to impede the Catholic Relief Bill of 1778 by raising difficulties about the effects of relief of the Catholics on the Act of Settlement; and after he arrived in power, he was a steady and bitter opponent of every measure of concession.[2] He was sometimes obliged to yield. He was sometimes opposed to his colleagues in Ireland, and more often to the Government in England, but the main lines of his policy were on the whole maintained, and it is difficult to exaggerate the evil they caused. To him, more perhaps than to any other man, it is due that nothing was done during the quiet years that preceded the French Revolution to diminish the corruption of the Irish Parliament, or the extreme anomalies of the Irish ecclesiastical establishment. He was the soul of that small

[1] P. 22.

[2] 'My unalterable opinion is, that so long as human nature and the popish religion continue to be what I know they are, a conscientious popish ecclesiastic never will become a well-attached subject to a Protestant State, and that the popish clergy must always have a commanding influence on every member of that communion.' *Speech on the Union*, p. 69

group of politicians, who, by procuring the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam and the refusal of Catholic emancipation in 1795, flung the Catholics into the rebellion of 1798, and his influence was one of the chief obstacles to the determination of Pitt to carry Catholic Emancipation concurrently with the Union. He looked, indeed, upon the Union as shutting the door for ever against the Catholics, and it was only when it had been carried by his assistance, that he learned to his bitter indignation that the Government, without his knowledge, had been negotiating secretly with their leaders.[1]

The possibility of a loyal Irish Parliament undergoing parliamentary and ministerial fluctuations, like those which are now frequent in the robust constitutional Governments of the colonies, never appears to have entered into his calculations, and he avowed very cynically that in his theory of a separate Parliament, corruption should be the normal method of government. 'The only security,' he said, 'which can by possibility exist for national concurrence, is a permanent and commanding influence of the English Executive, or rather of the English Cabinet, in the councils of Ireland.' 'A majority in the Parliament of Great Britain will defeat the Minister of the day, but a majority of the Parliament of Ireland against the King's Government goes directly to separate this kingdom from the British Crown. . . . It is vain to expect, so long as man continues to be a creature of passion and interest, that he will not avail himself of the critical and difficult situation in which the Executive Government of this kingdom must ever remain under its present Constitution, to demand the favours of the Crown, not as the reward of loyalty and service, but as the stipulated price to be paid in advance for the discharge of a public duty.'[2] In one of the debates on the Regency he openly avowed that half a million had on a former occasion been spent to secure an address to Lord Townshend, and intimated very plainly that the same sum would if necessary be spent again.[3]

We can hardly judge such sentiments with fairness, if we do not remember that with the partial and disastrous exception of

[1] Lord Holland's *Mems. of the Whig Party*, i. 162. See Grattan's *Life*, iii. 402, 403.

[2] *Speech on the Union*, pp. 45, 46.

[3] *Irish Parl. Deb.* ix 181. Grattan more than once alluded to this speech.

the American Legislatures, the experiment of free parliamentary life in colonies with which we are now so familiar had not yet been tried, and also that the necessity of retaining a great Crown influence in the English House of Commons was still widely held. Nor was this view confined to party men or to active and interested politicians. In 1752 Hume published those political essays which are still among the most valuable and were on their first appearance by far the most popular of his works, and in one of these essays he inquires what it is that prevents the House of Commons from breaking loose from its place in the Constitution and reducing the other powers to complete subservience to itself. He answers that 'the House of Commons stretches not its power because such a usurpation would be contrary to the interests of the majority of its members. The Crown has so many offices at its disposal that when assisted by the honest and disinterested part of the House it will always command the resolutions of the whole. . . . We may call this influence by the invidious appellations of corruption and dependence; but some degree and some kind of it are inseparable from the very nature of the Constitution, and necessary to the preservation of our mixed government.'[1]

To exactly the same effect is the judgment of Paley, whose treatise on moral and political philosophy appeared in 1785, and who devoted an admirable chapter to the actual working of the British Constitution. He asserts that about half of the members sitting in the House of Commons of England when he wrote, held their seats either by purchase or by the nomination of single patrons, and he urged with singular ingenuity that, however absurd it might appear in theory, some such system of representation was absolutely necessary in the British Constitution to give cohesion and solidity to the whole, to counteract the natural centrifugal tendency which would otherwise lead the House of Commons to break loose from its place in the Constitution, and the natural tendency of its own democratic element to acquire a complete control over its policy. He describes the saying that an 'independent parliament is incompatible with the existence of a monarchy' as containing 'not more of paradox than of truth,' and he attributes the severance of the British colonies in North

[1] Essay VIII. on *Independency of Parliaments.*

America from the mother country, mainly to the fact that the English Government held so little patronage in those colonies that it was never able to acquire a commanding and interested support in the colonial Legislatures.[1]

In such maxims we find principles very similar to those of Fitzgibbon, and they were unfortunately predominant in the Irish councils. 'The question of reform,' Rutland wrote to Pitt, 'should it be carried in England, would tend greatly to increase our difficulties, and I do not see how it will be evaded. In England it is a delicate question, but in this country it is difficult and dangerous to the last degree. The views of the Catholics render it extremely hazardous. . . . Your proposition of a certain proportionable addition to county members would be the least exceptionable, and might not, perhaps, materially interfere with the system of Parliament in this country, which, though it must be confessed that it does not bear the smallest resemblance to representation, I do not see how quiet and good government could exist under any more popular mode.'[2] 'The object of re-

[1] 'In the British colonies of North America the late Assemblies possessed much of the power and constitution of our House of Commons. The King and Government of Great Britain held no patronage in the country which could create attachment and influence sufficient to counteract that restless, arrogating spirit, which in popular assemblies, when left to itself, will never brook an authority that checks and interferes with its own. To this cause, excited perhaps by some unseasonable provocations, we may attribute, as to their true and proper original, we will not say the misfortunes, but the changes which have taken place in the British Empire.' Paley's *Moral and Political Philosophy*, vi. ch. vii.

[2] June 16, 1784. Dr. Halliday, the founder of the Whig Club, in a letter to Charlemont, complains that 'an English Whig is only a Whig for England, but a Tory with respect to her dependencies,' and he adds, 'I have been candidly told that since the acknowledgment of our independency, nothing can preserve the integrity and peace of the Empire but a government of corruption in Ireland . . . that a truly democratic House of Commons, one really the representative of the people here, would shiver all to pieces.' April 10, 1785. *Charlemont Papers.* Lord Camden, who had pushed Whig principles during the American contest to their extreme consequences, was in Ulster in the summer of 1784, and he wrote a curious letter to the Duke of Grafton on the state of Ireland. 'There is one question,' he said, 'that seems to have taken possession of the whole kingdom, and that is the reform of Parliament, about which they seem very much in earnest. For who (*sic*) does wish so much for that reformation at home cannot with much consistence refuse it to Ireland, and yet their corrupt Parliament is the only means we have left to preserve the union between the two countries. But that argument will not bear the light, and no means ought in my opinion to be adopted that is too scandalous to be avowed. I foresaw when we were compelled to grant independence to Ireland the mischief of the concession, and that sooner or later civil war would be the consequence.' (Aug. 13, 1784) Grafton's *MS. Autobiography.*

form,' he wrote a few months later, 'is by no means confined to a correction of alleged abuses in the representation, but extends to a substantial change of parliamentary influence. Nothing short of that will satisfy the clamorous, and any such change will completely dissatisfy the friends of Government and the established Constitution.' He warned the Government that any change in the representation would strengthen and perhaps unite the factious elements in the nation—'the Dissenters, who seek for such an alteration in the Constitution as will throw more power into their hands; . . . the Roman Catholics, whose superior numbers would speedily give them the upper hand if they were admitted to a participation in the Legislature; and those men who oppose the Government upon personal considerations.'[1] In accordance with these views we find him, at the very time when the demand for reform and retrenchment was at its height, advocating the creation of new places for the purpose of strengthening the parliamentary influence of Government.[2]

In sharp contrast with these views was the policy of Grattan and of a small number of able and patriotic men who followed his standard. Grattan clearly perceived that after the great triumph that had been achieved and the great agitation that had been undergone, it was necessary to pacify the public mind, to lead it back to the path of gradual administrative reform, to strengthen the Executive against the spirit of disorder, and at the same time to discourage all feeling of disloyalty to England. We have already seen how he looked upon the Renunciation

[1] Rutland to Sydney, Jan. 13, 1785.

[2] On April 19, 1784, he writes a curious (most secret and confidential) letter to Sydney about the growing independence of the Irish House of Lords. 'A greater attention and a more expensive influence than heretofore will therefore be required, if we seek, as we must, to direct its progress in the right way. A share also of the lucrative favours of Government must be set aside for the purpose of gaining attachments in that House, as the invention of mere external allurements will no longer maintain the influence which they may for a moment acquire.' He complains in consequence of 'the scantiness of the provision which is in the disposal of Government for the support of an increased and increasing number of claimants,' urges the 'necessity of taking some measure as early as possible for the enlargement of our means,' and says, 'it will be absolutely incumbent upon me to endeavour to establish in that House the strongest and most immediate connection of administration with a certain number of powerful members, who may be at all times looked to for the declaration and explanation of the intentions and wishes of Government.'

Act, the Volunteer Convention, and the proposed diminution of the military establishments. In 1782, when the Dublin weavers resolved to enter into a non-importation agreement, he dexterously defeated the design by substituting for it a subscription list, pledging all who signed to purchase Irish goods to the amount placed opposite their names.[1] He steadily opposed the agitation for protecting duties which would have separated the commercial interests of England and Ireland.[2] He was foremost in denouncing a portion of the Irish press which was openly inciting to assassination, and which had lately introduced a detestable system, that already existed in England, of extorting money from timid individuals by threats of slander, and in spite of the violent outcry that was raised, he cordially supported Foster's Press Bill.[3] The tone of the seditious press he justly described as a matter deserving the most serious consideration of Parliament. 'I have no idea,' he said, 'of wounding the liberty of the press, but if it be suffered to go on in the way it is at present, one of two things must ensue: it will either excite the unthinking to acts of desperation, or it will itself fall into utter contempt, after having disgraced the nation.'[4]

In 1785, when the Government resolved to organise the militia chiefly for the purpose of rendering the volunteer force unnecessary, Grattan gave them his full support; and when this measure was represented as an offence to the volunteers, he repudiated the argument with a scathing severity. 'The volunteers,' he said, 'had no right whatever to be displeased at the establishment of a militia, and if they had expressed displeasure, the dictate of armed men ought to be disregarded by Parliament.' 'We are the Legislature and they the subject.' 'The situation

[1] May 18, 1782, Portland to Shelburne.

[2] Grattan's *Life*, iii. 289.

[3] Plowden, ii. 89. 'Government has been necessarily under very great difficulties, and must feel much obligation to those persons who have assisted in bringing about the fortunate event [the passing of the Press Bill]. It is really but justice to Mr. Grattan that I should put him at the head of such a list. The manly and decisive tone in which he pointed out the necessity of some regulations and restrictions, and of securing the liberty of the press (to use his own expression) *against the attacks of the printers*; the fair and explicit justice which he did to administration by stating the nature of their proposition and their declared readiness to conciliate unanimity by any concession which on fair discussion should be generally thought advisable, had altogether a striking effect upon the House, and contributed greatly to make the whole measure acceptable.' Rutland to Sydney (secret and confidential), April 12, 1784.

[4] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iii. 166.

of the House would be truly unfortunate if the name of the volunteers could intimidate it. . . . That great and honourable body of men, the primitive volunteers, deserved much of their country, but I am free to say that they who now assume the name have much degenerated. . . . There is a cankered part of the dregs of the people that has been armed. Let no gentleman give such men countenance, or pretend to join them with the original volunteers.' He looked with extreme disapprobation on all attempts to set up rival centres of political power outside Parliament, and at the risk of a complete sacrifice of his popularity he censured in strong terms the national congress which had assembled in Dublin, asserting that, whether it was legal or not, such a body was not reconcilable with a House of Commons; that 'two sets of representatives, one *de jure*, and another supposing itself a representative *de facto*, cannot well co-exist,' and that it was such meetings that 'gave the business of reform the cast and appearance of innovation and violence.' 'The populace,' he said, 'differ much and should be clearly distinguished from the people.' 'An appeal to the latent and summary powers of the people should be reserved for extraordinary exigencies. The rejection of a popular Bill is no just cause for their exertion.'[1]

No politician had ever less sympathy than Grattan with disorder and anarchy; and his whole theory of Irish politics was very far from democratic. From first to last it was a foremost article of his policy that it was essential to the safe working of representative institutions in Ireland that they should be under the full guidance and control of the property of the country, and that the greatest of all calamities would be that this guidance should pass into the hands of adventurers and demagogues. He desired

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iv. 237, 238; Grattan's *Life*, iii. 214-216. Orde, describing the debates, says, 'Mr. Grattan, in a most able and ingenious speech, condemned in the strongest terms the meeting of the congress as not existing in the principles of the Constitution and destroying the very existence of Parliament. He pointed out the illegality of some of the addresses and resolutions, and several of the county meetings where, all the inhabitants being admitted, the rights of freeholders were overturned and wrested from them by the populace. He described the change that those violences had made in the volunteer institutions, that they had formerly consisted of responsible and respectable characters, whereas now Roman Catholics were admitted, and the lowest and most riotous of the people were armed.' Orde to Nepean, Jan. 26, 1785.

the House of Commons to be a body consisting mainly of the independent landed gentry and leading lawyers, and resting mainly on a freehold suffrage; and he would have gladly included in it the leading members of that Catholic gentry who had long been among the most loyal and most respectable subjects of the Crown. He believed that a body so constituted was most likely to draw together the severed elements of Irish life; to watch over Irish interests; to guide the people upwards to a higher level of civilisation and order; to correct the many and glaring evils of Irish life. But in order that it should perform this task, it was indispensable that it should be a true organ of national feeling; a faithful representative of educated opinion and of independent property; able and willing to pursue energetically the course of administrative reform which was imperatively needed. It was necessary above all that the system of governing exclusively by corruption and family interest should be terminated. Such a system was absolutely inevitable in a Parliament constituted like that of Ireland, and without any one of the more important legislative guarantees of parliamentary purity that existed in England.

Grattan would gladly have left it to the Government to take the initiative in the question of parliamentary reform, but when that question was introduced he strongly maintained, in opposition to the Government, that the Bills which were brought before the House should at least be suffered to go into committee, to be discussed, modified, and amended in detail. While opposing a reduction of the military establishments he maintained that for this very reason civil retrenchment ought to be more earnestly pursued, and he vainly attempted to procure an inquiry into the expense of collecting the revenue. He complained that this expense had risen between 1758 and 1783 from 81,000*l.* to 157,000*l.*, from 13 to 16 per cent. of the revenue, and that it was a common thing to grant by royal prerogative large additional salaries to sinecure or perfectly insignificant offices, held by supporters of the Government, in order that their names should not appear in the pension list. Grattan vainly tried to procure a parliamentary condemnation of this system of masked pensions, and he dilated in many able speeches on the absolute necessity of reducing the expenditure

within the limits of the public income. During the Administration of Lord Northington he gave the Government an independent support, but in the following Administrations, when the influence of Fitzgibbon became supreme, when it was evident that the Government was opposed to all serious retrenchment and reform, when pensions and offices were created with the obvious purpose of increasing parliamentary influence, Grattan passed gradually into opposition and endeavoured to create an organised party capable, if any change occurred, of taking the reins of power. He was at this time undisputed leader of his party. Flood reintroduced his Reform Bill in the spring of 1785, and he afterwards concurred heartily with Grattan in opposing the amended commercial propositions; but after this time he rarely appeared in the Irish Parliament, and he died in 1791. Charlemont had never much parliamentary influence, and the Bishop of Derry soon after the episode of the Convention left Ireland on the plea of ill-health, and spent the remaining years of his life in Italy, where he led a wild and profligate life, and at length died in 1803 at Albano.[1]

The measures advocated by Grattan and the small party who followed him, during the period we are considering, were usually of the most moderate character. A place Bill limiting the number of placemen who sat in the House of Commons, copied from that which for more than eighty years had existed in the English Statute-book; a pension Bill limiting the number of pensioners; a responsibility Bill giving additional guarantees for the proper expenditure of different branches of the revenue, and a disenfranchisement of revenue and custom-house officers like that which had been carried in England under Rockingham, would at this time have satisfied their demands. But such demands were met with a steady resistance. Nothing was done to diminish the evil, and, on the contrary, it continued to increase. It was alleged in Parliament, apparently with

[1] Some very curious letters of the Bishop in 1795–6 to the Countess de Lichtenau (the mistress of the King of Prussia) will be found in the memoirs of that lady. The Bishop was a great patron of art in Italy. He appears to have openly professed materialist opinions. On the outbreak of war between England and France he was imprisoned by the French for eighteen months at Milan. Several particulars relating to his Italian life will be found in the *Life of Lady Hamilton*, and in Lord Cloncurry's *Personal Recollections*, 190, 191. See, too, the enthusiastic dedication to the Bishop, of Martin Sherlock's curious *Letters of an English Traveller*.

perfect truth, that in the beginning of 1789, exclusive of the military pensions, the pension list had risen to 101,000*l.* a year, and that pensions to the amount of 16,000*l.*, many of them distributed among members of Parliament, had been created since March 1784, besides considerable additional salaries which had been added to several obsolete, useless, and sinecure offices in the hands of members of Parliament.[1] Grattan in the beginning of 1790 described in a few graphic words the condition of the House of Commons. 'Above two-thirds of the returns to this House are private property; of those returns many actually this moment sold to the Minister; the number of placemen and pensioners sitting in this House equals near one-half of the whole efficient body; the increase of that number within the last twenty years is greater than all the counties in Ireland.'[2]

The rights which Irish commerce had attained in the last few years have already been described. The very liberal legislation of Lord North had granted Ireland the full right of direct trade with the English plantations of Africa and America, on the sole condition of establishing the same duties and regulations as those to which the English trade with the plantations was subject, and also a full participation of the English trade with the Levant, while the subsequent establishment of her legislative independence had left her absolutely free to regulate her trade by treaty with all foreign countries. The monopoly of the East India Company still excluded her from the Asiatic trade, but in the present condition of her undeveloped manufactures this was not considered a matter of any real importance. The trade between England and Ireland was of course regulated by the Acts of their respective Parliaments. Ireland admitted all English goods either freely or at low duties; she had not imposed any prohibitory duty on them, and whenever she laid heavy duties on any article which could be produced in Great Britain, she had almost always excepted the British article.[3] The British

[1] See the resolutions of Forbes, Feb. 11, 1790, and Grattan's speech, Feb. 20, 1790 (Grattan's *Speeches*, ii. 237, 238, 243).

[2] Grattan's *Speeches*, ii. 210 (Feb. 1, 1790)

[3] See *The Proposed System of Trade with Ireland explained* (1785), pp. 31, 32. This very able pamphlet was written by George Rose, who took a leading part in Pitt's commercial legislation. It was commonly called 'the Treasury pamphlet,' and attracted much attention from being understood to represent most fully the views of the Government.

Parliament had excluded most Irish manufactures, and especially Irish manufactured wool, by duties amounting to prohibition, but in the interest of English woollen manufacturers it freely admitted Irish woollen yarn, and in the interest of Ireland it admitted linen, which was the most important article of Irish manufacture, without any duty whatever, and even encouraged it by a small bounty. 'The whole amount of the British manufacture which Ireland actually takes from England under a low duty,' said Pitt, 'does not amount to so much as the single article of linen which we are content to take from you under no duty at all.'[1] Either Parliament had the right of altering this arrangement, and it was tolerably certain that if Ireland imposed prohibitory taxes on English goods, England would pursue a corresponding policy towards Irish linen. By a construction of the Navigation Act, foreign commodities could not be carried into England by or through Ireland, and although Ireland had the right of trading directly with the colonies, she was prohibited from sending plantation goods to England, or receiving them from her.[2] She might, however, send her own manufactures to Africa and America, and bring back to Great Britain all their produce.[3]

Pitt was one of the few persons who perceived that a perpetual free trade between the two countries would be an advantage to both, and he hoped to frame such a treaty as would unite the two parts of the Empire indissolubly both for military and commercial purposes, would put an end to all possibility of a future war of hostile tariffs, and, without altering essentially the existing constitutional arrangements, would at the same time add considerably to the military strength of the Empire. He proposed that a treaty should be carried, establishing for the future perfect free trade between the two countries. But as such a treaty, throwing open to Ireland the enormous markets of England, and securing to her for ever the market of the plantations, would be a much greater boon to Ireland than to England, Ireland might reasonably be expected to purchase

[1] Pitt to the Duke of Rutland, Jan. 6, 1785. Fitzgibbon stated at this time that the imports from England did not exceed one million, and the exports to England exceeded two millions and a half.

[2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iv. 178, 188.

[3] *The System of Trade with Ireland explained*, p. 20.

it by paying a fixed contribution in time of peace and war to the general defence of the Empire. The terms of the proposal were very clearly stated in a confidential letter from Sydney to Rutland: 'Your grace should endeavour to obtain, at the same time with the intended commercial regulations, an act of the Parliament of Ireland appropriating the future surplus of the hereditary revenue . . . to the Navy and general defence of the Empire . . . leaving the manner of applying it, and of having it particularly accounted for, to the Parliament of this country. It should also be explicitly understood, first, that any mode of contribution to be thus established is not to be made a pretext for withdrawing any part of the aid now given by the Irish Parliament towards the general expenses of the Empire, in the maintenance of the regiments upon the Irish establishment serving out of this kingdom, and, secondly, that such a fund is considered only as a means for defraying . . . the ordinary expenses of the Empire in time of peace, and that Ireland will still in case of war or any extraordinary emergency be called upon and expected voluntarily to contribute, as in reason and justice she ought, to such further exertions as the situation of affairs and the general interests of the Empire may from time to time require.'[1] The hereditary revenue was selected as the source of the proposed contribution for two reasons—because it consisted mainly of custom and excise duties, the increase in which would, it was anticipated, be a direct consequence of the commercial boons that were offered; and because the proposition was likely to be more palatable to the Irish Parliament as it gave that Parliament a right of appropriating for ever to objects in which Ireland had an essential interest, a portion of the revenue which was now 'entrusted to the general direction of the Crown.'[2] The Navy was selected for the application of the fund because it would always be in part employed to defend the coast and the commerce of Ireland. The Parliaments of the two nations were in the first instance to be asked to carry resolutions embodying these terms, and these resolutions were then to be turned into Bills.

Before the plan was brought into Parliament it was fully

[1] Sydney to Rutland, Jan. 6, 1785 (most secret and confidential).
[2] Ibid. Feb. 1, 1785.

discussed in confidential letters which passed between the English and Irish Governments, and the Lord-Lieutenant clearly stated what were likely to be the Irish objections to the scheme. The creation of a free trade between England and Ireland was the great offer made to Ireland, but there was a party in Ireland who looked upon this much more as an evil than as a good. It would for ever prevent Ireland from improving her manufactures by protecting duties or special bounties on exportation, and would secure the ascendency which great capital, extensive establishments, and a settled position had given to English manufacturers even in the Irish market. The plantation trade ought surely, it would be said, not to be made an element in a new bargain, for it had been already granted to Ireland under Lord North, and he had in this respect only replaced Ireland in the position she had occupied before the amended Navigation Act of Charles II. These things, however, the Lord-Lieutenant thought could be got over, but he warned the Government that the provision obliging Ireland to contribute to the Imperial expenditure must be managed with extreme delicacy, and might lead to the most violent resistance. No such stipulation had been annexed to the commercial concessions of 1779. The public revenue of Ireland was at this time at least 150,000*l.* a year less than the public charges, and therefore it was exceedingly unfit to bear an additional burden. Nor was this a time in which any unpopular proposal could be safely brought forward. 'The disappointment by Parliament of the popular expectations respecting a reform in the representation, and their not granting protecting duties which the manufacturers of this city more particularly demanded, drove the people from their accustomed deference to the decisions of Parliament, and led them to look to other methods of accomplishing their ends by means of a congress and by non-importation agreements. The county candidates in general found themselves under the necessity of giving in to the popular cry, and the unsuccessful candidates joined in.' Abstractedly, the proposal of the Government seemed to the Lord-Lieutenant perfectly just, but he feared that it would be so unpopular that even if it were carried through Parliament it would seriously unsettle the country and unite the factious elements. England should be content with the large

military expenditure which Ireland cheerfully contributed to the Empire, and with the many indirect ways in which she benefited the richer country.[1] To insist upon a forced contribution would probably have the effect of diminishing the voluntary grants, and would therefore be of no service to the Empire, while constitutional objections of the most serious kind might be raised. This was the first instance of an attempt to impose an obligatory contribution, and it would be a calamitous thing if it could be represented as bearing any resemblance to the policy which had proved so disastrous in America. Any stipulation which tended to make Ireland a tributary of England, which deprived the Irish Parliament of its exclusive control over Irish resources, which made it in any degree dependent on or inferior to the British Legislature, would strike the most sensitive chord in the Irish Parliament. 'If the surplus,' wrote Rutland, 'is in any way whatever to be remitted into England either in money or in goods, the resolution will never be carried.' If the Government insisted upon a contribution, the Lord-Lieutenant hoped that it might be specified that it should be expended in Ireland; and it might be employed for the purpose of maintaining a portion of the British Navy devoted to the defence of the Irish coast.[2]

Pitt himself devoted some confidential letters to an explanation of the views of the Cabinet, and they appear to me eminently creditable both to his economical sagacity and to his honesty of purpose.[3] 'In the relation of Great Britain' [with

[1] The extreme Irish view of these advantages was thus stated by Flood: 'What nation would not protect Ireland without tribute, to whom Ireland were to give what she gives to Britain? She gives her the nomination of her monarch, and therein of her whole administration through every department; a third estate in her Legislature; the creation of her peerage; the influence over placemen and pensioners in the House of Commons; she gives her a mighty army; the use of near a million and a half of yearly revenue; five millions a year in imports and exports; above a million a year in absentee expenditure which, at the grievous issue of one million a year from Ireland, carries above two hundred thousand pounds a year in taxes into the British exchequer; she gives her the use of three millions of people in peace and war, and of seventeen millions of English acres in a happy climate and a happy soil, and so situated as to be the best friend or the worst enemy in the world to Britain.' *Irish Parl. Deb.* v. 398, 399.

[2] Rutland to Sydney, Jan. 13, 24, 25, 1785.

[3] The correspondence between Pitt and Rutland was privately printed by Lord Stanhope (then Lord Mahon) in 1842. The correspondence of the Irish Government with Sydney is, of course, in the Record Office.

Ireland], he wrote, 'there can subsist but two possible principles of connection, one, that which is exploded, of total subordination in Ireland and of restrictions on her commerce for the benefit of this country, which was by this means enabled to bear the whole burden of the Empire; the other, . . . that of an equal participation of all commercial advantages and some proportion of the charge of protecting the general interests.' 'The fundamental principle and the only one on which the whole plan can be justified . . . is that for the future the two countries will be to the most essential purposes united. On this ground the wealth and prosperity of the whole is the object; from what local sources they arise is indifferent.' 'We open to Ireland the chance of a competition with ourselves on terms of more than equality, and we give her advantages which make it impossible she should ever have anything to fear from the jealousy or restrictive policy of this country in future.' We desire to make 'England and Ireland one country in effect, though for local concerns under distinct Legislatures, one in the communication of advantages, and, of course, in the participation of burdens.' 'In order to effect this we are departing from the policy of prohibiting duties so long established in this country. In doing so we are, perhaps, to encounter the prejudices of our manufacturing [interests] in every corner of the kingdom. We are admitting to this competition a country whose labour is cheap and whose resources are unexhausted; ourselves burdened with accumulated taxes which are felt in the price of every necessary of life, and, of course, enter into the cost of every article of manufacture. It is, indeed, stated on the other hand that Ireland has neither the skill, the industry, nor the capital of this country; but it is difficult to assign any good reason why she should not gradually, with such strong encouragement, imitate and rival us in both the former, and in both more rapidly from time, as she grows possessed of a larger capital, which, with all the temptations for it, may, perhaps, to some degree be transferred to her from hence, but which will, at all events, be increased if her commerce receives any extension.'

England, however, had a perfect right to make the opening of the plantation market an element in the question. The re-

moval of restrictions which prevented Ireland from trading with foreign countries had been a matter of justice; but the English plantations had been established under the sole direction of the English Parliament and Government; it was, therefore, by a mere act of favour that Ireland was suffered to trade directly with them;[1] it was proposed that she should have the additional advantage of supplying England through Ireland with their goods, and now that a final arrangement is made, now that 'the balance is to be struck and the account closed between the two countries, we must take full credit as well for what has been given by others . . . as for what we give ourselves.'

The indispensable condition to be insisted on, is that there should be 'some fixed mode of contribution on the part of Ireland, in proportion to her growing means, to the general defence;' that this contribution should not be left dependent upon the disposition and humour, the opinions and interests, that may from time to time prevail in the Irish Parliament, and that it should be under the complete control of the supreme Executive of the Empire. 'In Ireland it cannot escape consideration that this is a contribution not given beforehand for uncertain expectations, but which can only follow the actual possession and enjoyment of the benefits in return for which it is given. If Ireland does not grow richer and more populous she will by this scheme contribute nothing. If she does grow richer by the participation of our trade, surely she ought to contribute, and the measure of that contribution cannot with equal justice be fixed in any other proportion. It can never be contended that the increase of the hereditary revenue ought to be left to Ireland as the means of gradually diminishing her other taxes, unless it can be argued that the whole of what Ireland now pays is a greater burden, in proportion, than the whole of what is paid by this country. . . . It is to be remembered that the very increase supposed to arise in the hereditary revenue cannot arise without a similar increase in many articles of the additional taxes; consequently from that circumstance alone, though they part with the future increase

[1] This had been stated by Lord North. See Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iii. 647. Pitt does not urge in his letters, a point on which the Ministry in Ireland dwelt largely —that the Act granting Ireland the plantation trade was revocable at pleasure, while the commercial treaty would secure it for ever.

of their hereditary revenue, their income will be upon the whole increased, without imposing any additional burdens. On the whole, therefore, if Ireland allows that she ought ever in time of peace to contribute at all, I can conceive no plausible objection to the particular mode proposed.'[1]

'The idea of Ireland contributing only for the support of her own immediate and separate benefit,' Sydney urged, 'is the direct reverse of the principle which ought to govern the present settlement and utterly inadmissible.'[2] It was essential to the strength and unity of the Empire that some such contribution as was proposed should be made, and it was perfectly idle to suppose that without some such evident advantage to the Empire the English Parliament would consent to relinquish its trade monopolies. The most desirable arrangement, in the opinion of the Government, would be that the surplus of the Irish hereditary revenue should be applied to the reduction of the English national debt. But if, as might easily be expected, this very singular proposal proved unacceptable, the Cabinet insisted that the surplus must at least be set aside by the Irish Parliament to be applied to the naval forces of the Empire. There was no objection to giving a preference to Irish stores and manufactures for the use of the Navy, and if it was absolutely impossible to carry the scheme in any other form, the required sum might be annually appropriated by, and the estimates annually laid before, the Irish Parliament.[3]

Pitt's plan was brought before the Irish Parliament on February 7, 1785, in the form of ten resolutions. Their most important provisions were that all foreign and colonial goods might pass from England to Ireland and from Ireland to England without any increase of duty, that all Irish goods might be imported into England and all English goods into Ireland either freely or at duties which were the same in each country, that where the duties in the two countries were now unequal they should be equalised by reducing the higher duty to the level of the lower, that except in a few carefully specified cases there should be no new duties on importation or bounties on exportation, that each country should give a preference in its markets to the

[1] Pitt to Rutland, Dec. 4, 1784; Jan. 6, March 1, 1785.
[2] Sydney to Rutland (most secret), Feb. 1, 1785.
[3] Ibid.

goods of the other over the same goods imported from abroad, and that whenever the hereditary revenue exceeded a sum which was as yet not specified, the surplus 'should be appropriated towards the support of the naval forces of the Empire in such manner as the Parliament of this kingdom shall direct.'[1]

These were the propositions now laid by Orde before the Irish Parliament, but it was soon found that one important modification of the plan was necessary. Grattan looked with much favour upon the general scheme, but he at first hesitated about the compulsory contribution. It assumed, to his mind, too much the appearance of a subsidy. It was indefinite in its amount and might rise with the prosperity of the country to a wholly inordinate sum, and he evidently agreed with Foster that as a matter of policy 'it would be better for Britain to leave the affair to the liberality and ability of the moment when our aid might be necessary.'[2] This objection, however, on reflection he was ready to waive, but he insisted strenuously that no additional contribution should be paid to the general defence of the Empire till the Government had consented to put an end to the ruinous system of annual deficits and almost annual loans which had already seriously injured the credit of the nation.[3] In order

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iv. 116–125.

[2] Grattan's *Life*, iii. 236–239. See, too, *Irish Parl. Deb.* vi. 121.

[3] Rutland describes a conversation of Orde with Grattan. 'No argument could move him [Grattan] to consent to the appropriation of the surplus for the purposes of the Empire until Ireland should be free from all burthen of debt. Your lordship is not unacquainted with Mr. G.'s character, and experience has shown to what effect he can exercise his abilities when a strong ground of popularity is given him to stand upon.' After several conversations, 'Mr. Grattan remained obstinate in his opinion unless the expenses of government should be made equal to the revenue. He said he knew this to be the opinion of every intelligent and knowing man with whom he had communicated upon the subject . . . that he should state his opinion in Parliament with such arguments as he was convinced would render it impossible for any honest man, who pretended to the slightest regard to his country, to support the measure. . . . He thought the present system of carrying on government by accumulated loans was highly ruinous. . . . He conjured Mr. Orde to see the chief friends of Government, and know explicitly their opinion.' Orde, knowing that several of the most zealous friends of the Government thought ill of the policy of the measure, determined not to call them together, but having a meeting of some of the chief law officers in his apartment, he 'mentioned with a seeming carelessness that Mr. Grattan still continued his objection to the last resolution, when they one and all burst out with entreaties that the proposition might be revised, that some turn might be given to it to avoid the strong objection admitted by every one against bringing it in while the present income of the nation fell so much short of the expense.' Upon this opinion the Government determined to introduce an additional resolution. Rutland to Sydney (most secret), Feb. 12, 1785.

to meet this objection a new resolution was introduced, which made the contribution in time of peace contingent upon the establishment of a balance between revenue and expenditure. The hereditary revenue was now 652,000*l.* and was steadily rising. The new resolution provided that whatever surplus it produced 'above the sum of 656,000*l.* in each year of peace wherein the annual revenue shall equal the annual expense, and in each year of war without regard to such equality, should be appropriated towards the support of the naval force of the Empire in such manner as the Parliament of this kingdom shall direct.'[1]

Sydney, in a secret letter to Rutland, expressed his strong dislike to this concession to the views of Grattan,[2] but the English Government took no step to disavow their representatives in Ireland, and Rutland himself urgently maintained that the new condition was both necessary, politic, and just. 'The continued accumulation of debt and the providing for it by annual loans must be acknowledged to be a ruinous system. The extent to which these loans have already arrived in the last nine or ten years has sunk the value of Government four per cent. debentures, which were above par, to eighty-eight per cent. . . . 'When the nation, instead of applying the redundancy of its revenues to the discharge of its incumbrances, agrees to appropriate that redundancy to the general expenses of the Empire, it cannot be thought unjust that it should at the same time restrain the Government from running into debt.'[3]

Though the resolutions were vehemently opposed in the House of Commons by Flood and a few other members, and though there were a few hostile petitions from manufacturers who desired protecting duties and who saw that all chance of obtaining them was now likely to disappear, they encountered no serious or formidable difficulty, and at last passed through the Irish Parliament with a general concurrence. Grattan in a few words commended them as not only strengthening the Empire, but also securing the great end of a sound and honest financial administration, by interesting both the British and Irish Ministers in Irish economy. 'The plan,' he said, 'is open, fair, and just, and such as the British Minister can justify to

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iv. 201.
[2] Sydney to Rutland, Feb. 24, 1785.
[3] Rutland to Sydney, Feb. 25 and March 4, 1785.

both nations.'[1] One of the first consequences of the resolutions was a motion which was introduced by Foster, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and carried by a large majority, imposing restrictions on the grants to manufactures, charities, and public works, which had hitherto been lavishly and often corruptly voted,[2] and the Parliament then imposed additional taxes estimated to produce 140,000*l.* a year for the purpose of enabling Ireland to fulfil her part in the transaction and showing that she had no desire to evade the obligation of a contribution.[3]

The popular portion of the House appears to have, with very few exceptions, fully concurred with the Government, and there was no sign of serious disturbance in the country. There was, undoubtedly, a party among the manufacturers who hated with a desperate hatred the notion of free trade; but it had little political power, and it would on the whole perhaps not be too much to say that economical opinion at this time was more enlightened in Ireland than in England. The manner in which new arguments are received often depends much less upon their intrinsic weight, than upon the disposition of the hearers, and circumstances had given English mercantile opinion a strong bias towards monopoly, and Irish opinion an almost equal bias towards free trade. The great, ancient, and wealthy industries of England, largely represented in the Imperial Parliament, fortified in all directions by laws of privilege, and commanding the markets of all the subordinate portions of the Empire, were very naturally marked out by their circumstances as the champions of monopoly, and their representatives regarded the advantages of the protective system as self-evident. The arguments of Hume and of Adam Smith appeared to them the mere subtleties of unpractical theorists, glaringly opposed to the dictates of common sense, and belonging to the same category as the speculations which denied the existence of matter, or of free will, or of a sense of right and wrong in man. The whole commercial history of Ireland, on the other hand, since the Restoration, had been a desperate struggle against commercial restrictions, and Irish thinkers were therefore prepared

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iv. 198. [2] Ibid. 212, 218, 219.
[3] Ibid. v. 34–43.

to welcome the new school of writers, who maintained that a policy of commercial restriction was universally and essentially unsound.

The resolutions passed to England, and were introduced by Pitt on February 22, in a speech of masterly power; but it soon appeared that they were destined to encounter a most formidable opposition. Fox and North at once denounced the propositions as ruinous to English commerce, and all over England the commercial classes were soon arrayed in the most violent opposition to the plan. Delegates of manufacturers from all England met in London, and, chiefly under the direction of the illustrious Wedgwood, they formed themselves into a permanent association called 'The Great Chamber of the Manufacturers of Great Britain,' for watching over their interests. Petitions poured in from every important manufacturing centre in England and Scotland. Liverpool led the way; a petition from Lancashire bearing 80,000 signatures was laid on the floor of the House, and in a short time no less than sixty-two other petitions were presented. They alleged that the low taxes, and the low price of labour, in Ireland, would make anything like free trade ruinous to English manufacturers; that the English trader would be driven, not only out of the Irish, but even out of his own market; that the English manufacturer would be obliged in self-defence to transfer his works and capital to Ireland, and they clamorously demanded to be heard by counsel against the scheme.

Nearly twelve weeks were expended in hearing evidence against it, and during all that time the opposition in England was growing stronger and stronger. It was certain that the resolutions in their present form would not be carried, and when Pitt again brought forward the scheme in May 1785, the original eleven resolutions had expanded into twenty. Some of these related to patents, copyright of books, and the right of fishing on the British coast, and were open to little or no objection; but others modified the plan most seriously to the detriment of Ireland. Even after the expiration of the present charter of the East India Company, and as long as England thought fit to maintain any such company, Ireland was precluded from carrying on any direct trade with any part of the world, whether

English or foreign, beyond the Cape of Good Hope, to the Straits of Magellan, and from importing any goods of the growth, produce, or manufacture of India, except through Great Britain. She was prohibited from importing to England arrack, rum, foreign brandy, and strong waters, which did not come from the British West Indies. She was to be compelled to enact without delay, and without modification, all laws which either had been made, or which for the future should be made, by the British Parliament respecting navigation, all existing and future British laws regulating and restraining the trade of the British colonies and plantations, and all laws either prohibiting or imposing duties upon goods and commodities imported from either the British or foreign colonies, Africa, or America. The same regulating power of the British Parliament was extended to all goods exported from Ireland to the British colonies of America and the West Indies, and even to a portion of the trade with the United States of America.[1] With very few exceptions the same laws and restrictions would apply to the English and Irish trade; but the circumstances of the two countries were so widely different, that it was easy to show that they would often be most unequal in their operation, and it was for the British Parliament alone to determine the laws relating to navigation, to the trade with the English colonies, to the trade with the foreign plantations, and to part of the

[1] Resolutions 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 16. Grattan thus stated the effect of these provisions: 'You give to the English, West as well as East, an eternal monopoly for their plantation produce, in the taxing and regulating of which you have no sort of deliberation or interference, and over which Great Britain has a complete supremacy. . . . There is scarcely an article of the British plantation that is not out of all proportion dearer than the same article is in any other part of the globe, nor any other article that is not produced elsewhere, for some of which articles you might establish a mart for your manufactures. . . . What, then, is this covenant? To take these articles from the British plantations and from none other, at the present high rates and taxes, and to take them at all times to come, subject to whatever further rates and taxes the Parliament of Great Britain shall enact.' *Speeches*, i. 235. Flood, in a very remarkable passage, argued that the trade which was likely to be most beneficial to Ireland in the future was that with the United States, and that the commercial arrangement would completely destroy it. It 'subjects our imports from the independent States of America to such duties, regulations, and prohibitions as the British Parliament shall from time to time think fit to impose on Britain, as to all articles similar to those that are produced in the British colonies or settlements. Now what articles can America send to us, to which similar articles are not, or may not be, produced in some of the colonies or settlements of Britain?' *Irish Parl. Deb.* v. 402, 403.

trade with the United States. On all these subjects the right of legislation was virtually transferred or abdicated, for the Irish Parliament would have no propounding, deliberative, negative, or legislative power, and would be obliged simply to register the enactments of the Parliament in England.

Even in their modified form the commercial resolutions were bitterly opposed by Fox, North, Burke, and Sheridan; and Eden, whose authority on commercial matters was very great, was on the same side. Burke, though he was by no means an unqualified opponent of the propositions,[1] described one part of them as a repetition of the English policy in America—another attempt by the mother country, through the medium of Parliament, to raise a revenue by legislative regulations.[2] Fox and Sheridan declared that the resolutions went to the complete destruction of the commerce, manufacture, revenue, and mercantile strength of England, and they at the same time, while constituting themselves the especial champions of English commercial jealousy, did their utmost to excite Irish feeling against the scheme. They described it as a plan to make Ireland tributary to England, and as involving a complete surrender of the power of exclusive legislation, which Ireland so highly prized. It was, as Sheridan truly said, 'unquestionably a proposal on the part of the British Parliament, that Ireland should, upon certain conditions, surrender her now acknowledged right of external legislation, and return, as to that point, to the situation from which she had emancipated herself in 1782.' It bound Ireland, said Fox, to impose restraints 'undefined, unspecified, and uncertain, at the arbitrary demand of another State,' and Fox concluded his denunciation by a skilful sentence, which appealed at once to the jealousy of both countries. 'I will not,' he said, 'barter English commerce for Irish slavery; that is not the price I would pay, nor is this the thing I would purchase.'

Pitt exerted both his eloquence and his influence to the utmost, and at last, after a fierce debate which continued till past 8 A.M.,[3] the resolutions were carried by great majorities

[1] See a curious private letter which he wrote to Sir John Tydd, Grattan's *Life*, iii. 250–252.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xxv. 647–651; Wraxall's *Post Mems.* i. 320.

[3] See the animated account of it in Wraxall's *Post. Mems.* i. 310–320. Wraxall states that on one, if not more, occasion, in the Wilkes' discussions at the beginning of the reign,

through the English Parliament. It would probably have been on the whole to the advantage of Ireland even now to have accepted them, but we can hardly, I think, blame the Irish Parliament for its reluctance to do so. Pitt, in endeavouring to make them acceptable to England, had been obliged to argue that the industrial ascendency of England was such that serious Irish competition was little short of an impossibility, while the opposition in England had loudly proclaimed that the project was completely subversive of Irish independence. The resolutions to which the Irish Parliament had agreed were returned to it in a wholly altered form, and all the more important alterations were expressly directed against Irish interests, and tended to establish the ascendency of the British Parliament over Irish navigation and commerce. The very essence of the Constitution of 1782 was that the Irish Parliament possessed an exclusive right to legislate for Ireland commercially and externally, as well as internally, and it was this right which, three years after its establishment, Ireland was virtually asked in a great measure to surrender. The price, or at least a part of the price, which was asked for the commercial benefits that might be expected, was the relinquishment by Ireland of her full right of regulating her trade with foreign countries, and the restoration to the British Legislature of a large power of legislating for Ireland. It was said, indeed, that the new restrictions did not differ essentially, and in kind, from those under which Ireland had already accepted the trade to the English plantations, but it was answered that they at least differed enormously in the extent and uncertainty of the obligations imposed on future Irish legislation; in their interference with the rights of the Irish Parliament to regulate its foreign trade. It was said, too, that Ireland might at any time abandon the compact and regain her liberty; but once an intricate commercial system is established, it is often very difficult to withdraw from it, and as long as it continued, the hands of the Irish Parliament on many of the ordinary subjects of legislation would be completely tied. Grattan now

the House sat till 9 A.M. According to the *Parliamentary History*, however, the House adjourned at 6 A.M. in the great debate on the commercial propositions. The speech of Sheridan (*Parl. Hist.* xxv. 743–757) is probably the strongest statement of the case against the propositions.

denounced the scheme with fiery eloquence as fatal to that Irish Constitution which he valued even more than the British Empire.[1] Flood, once more, warmly co-operated with him. Several members on the Treasury Bench supported him. Petitions against the scheme flowed in from the great towns, and at last, after a debate which lasted continuously for more than seventeen hours and did not terminate till nine A.M., the House only granted leave to bring in a Bill based on the twenty resolutions, by 127 to 108.[2] Such a division at the first stage of the Bill, and in a House in which the Government usually commanded overwhelming majorities, was equivalent to a defeat; at the next meeting of Parliament, Orde announced his intention not to make any further progress with the Bill, and that night Dublin was illuminated in attestation of the popular joy.

The scheme for uniting the two countries by close commercial and military bonds thus signally failed, and it left a great deal of irritation and recrimination behind it. How, it was asked with much bitterness, can Ireland expect to be duly cared for in any treaty negotiation with Great Britain, when her only representatives in such a negotiation must be ministers appointed and instructed by the British Cabinet? The English Government appears to have acted with perfect honesty, and to have only modified its course under the pressure of overwhelming necessity, but its position in both countries was exceedingly embarrassing and somewhat humiliating. Orde, the Chief Secretary of Ireland, had brought forward the original propositions as the offer of the Government to Ireland. His supporters had represented them as certain to be carried in England, and on the strength of that assurance the Irish Parliament had voted 140,000*l.* a year of additional taxation. Yet the English Government had soon been obliged to discard that

[1] Rutland wrote of this speech to Pitt: 'The speech of Mr. Grattan was, I understand, a display of the most beautiful eloquence perhaps ever heard, but it was seditious and inflammatory to a degree hardly credible.' Aug. 13, 1785. Woodfall, the parliamentary reporter, heard this debate, and made the report which is in the *Parl. Deb.* It was also published separately. He wrote to Eden, 'Grattan, whose conversion is in Dublin ascribed to Sheridan's speech (which I took such pains to procure for the public correctly), was admirable. His manner, as you well know, is most singular; but he said some of the finest things in the newest mode I ever heard. *Auckland Correspondence*, i. 79, 80. See, too, Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 148, and the speech in Grattan's *Speeches*, ii. 231-249

[2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* v. 443.

principle of equality which was the essence of the original resolutions, and had returned them to Ireland so amplified and altered as to be scarcely recognisable. On the other hand, Pitt by the most strenuous efforts, and in the face of a storm of denunciation and unpopularity, had carried his commercial scheme through the Parliament of England, only to find it rejected in Ireland.

It is worthy of notice that the words 'legislative union' were at this time frequently pronounced in connection with the commercial propositions. The free trade which they would have secured to Ireland had only been granted to Scotland on the condition of a union. Wilberforce in the English House of Commons, and Lord Lansdowne in the English House of Lords, spoke of a legislative union as the best relation for the two countries, but pronounced it to be impracticable, as Ireland would never consent. Lord Sackville, on the other hand, argued strongly in favour both of the practicability and expediency of such a measure, and of its great superiority to a commercial treaty. Sydney, when reporting this speech to Rutland, spoke of a union as impracticable, 'especially at a time when the Irish were but just in possession of their favourite object, an independent Legislature.'[1] It is certain, however, that Rutland had some time previously expressed a strong opinion in favour of a legislative union,[2] and it was noticed that shortly after the rejection of the commercial propositions several pamphlets discussing that question were published.

No positive evils, however, appear to have followed from the rejection of the commercial propositions. Ireland as a distinct country continued to legislate independently for her commerce, and her Parliament did not show the faintest disposition to interfere with English commercial interests. The commercial treaty which Pitt negotiated with France in 1786 included Ireland, and it was vehemently opposed by the Whig party in Eng-

[1] Sydney to Rutland (secret and confidential), July 20, 1785.

[2] 'Were I to indulge a distant speculation, I should say that without a union Ireland will not be connected with Great Britain in twenty years longer.' Rutland to Pitt, June 16, 1784. In a speech delivered in 1799, Bishop Watson mentioned that in 1785 he had pressed the advantages of a union on Rutland, who had answered that 'he wholly approved of the measure, but added, the man who should attempt to carry it into execution would be tarred and feathered.' *Parl. Hist.* xxxiv. 736.

land; but the address approving it was carried in Ireland without a division, and the resolutions for making the necessary alterations in Irish duties passed without the smallest difficulty.[1] A new Irish Navigation Act proposed by the Government and adopting almost the whole of the English Navigation Act of Charles II. was soon after carried with equal facility.[2] A few years later some resolutions were moved resenting the exclusion of Ireland from the Asiatic trade, but nothing was done, and as far as commercial matters were concerned, England had certainly no reason to distrust or complain of the Irish Parliament. In 1790 applications were made by persons engaged in the leather trade in England, to limit by high duties the export of bark from Great Britain to Ireland, in order to insure the ascendency on the Continent of the English leather trade over that of Ireland. Lord Westmorland, who was then Lord-Lieutenant, remonstrated against this measure, and his letter to the English Government contains the following remarkable passage. 'Since the failure of the propositions for a commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland, no restraint or duty has been laid upon British produce or manufacture to prejudice the sale in this country, or to grasp at any advantage to articles of Irish manufacture, nor has any incumbrance, by duty or otherwise, been laid on materials of manufacture in the raw or middle state, upon their exportation to Great Britain. At the same time in everything wherein this country could concur in strengthening and securing the navigation and commerce of the Empire, the Government has found the greatest readiness and facility. The utmost harmony subsists in the commerce of the two kingdoms, and nothing has arisen to disturb it or give occasion for discontent.'[3]

[1] 'The resolutions of the House of Commons [relating to the changes of duty] were severally agreed to with the almost unanimous concurrence of the House.' 'Mr. Grattan spoke shortly but strongly in favour of the treaty, and said that although Ireland should fail of the benefit she might expect from it, such a disappointment ought not to be imputed to any defect in the treaty, which in his opinion was fair and liberal, and opened a promising field upon which the country might exert her arts and industry.' Orde to Nepean, March 6, 1787 (private). 'The treaty of commerce between Great Britain and France is very popular in this country, and the attention paid therein to the interests of Ireland, is felt with a sensible gratitude by the whole nation.' Rutland to Sydney (private), May 31, 1787.

[2] 27 Geo. III. c. 23. March 29, 1787, Orde to Nepean.

[3] Westmorland to W. Grenville (private), Nov. 19, 1790.

The commercial propositions of 1785 form the first of the two great differences between the English and Irish Parliaments. In the interval between their rejection and the dispute about the Regency, only a few incidents occurred to which it is necessary to refer.

The scandalous state of the administration of justice in the metropolis has been already adverted to, and in 1786 a Police Bill was introduced and carried by the Government, for the purpose of remedying it. Dublin was divided into four districts. The watchmen, who had hitherto been under the control of the several parishes, were reorganised and placed under three new paid commissioners of the peace, who were nominated by the Crown from among the Dublin magistrates, allowed to sit in Parliament, invested with large patronage and almost absolute power, and made practically responsible for the maintenance of order in the city. A new force of regular police—consisting, however, as yet, of only forty-four men—was created and placed under the commissioners. They were to see that the watchmen discharged their duties; they were also themselves to discharge ordinary police functions, and they had powers considerably beyond those of the old watchmen, of arresting suspicious persons and breaking into houses in search of criminals or stolen goods. Several rates were imposed for the purpose of supporting the new system, and there were many complicated police regulations of a less important character, which it is not necessary to describe.[1]

A somewhat similar scheme had shortly before been proposed for London, but it at once aroused opposition, and it had been dropped on account of a strongly adverse petition from the City.[2] The Government in England recommended the scheme as being almost equally needed in both capitals, but more easy to carry in Dublin than in London.[3] It speedily, however, aroused great opposition. Its opponents complained that it imposed a large additional expense upon the City; that it was essentially a patronage Bill intended to strengthen the power of the Government in the Corporation of Dublin, and to add to the very large number of places tenable by members of Parliament; that it violated the charter of the City by transferring the regulation

[1] 26 Geo. III. c. 24.
[2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* vi. 367, 368, 370.
[3] Sydney to Rutland (most secret), Jan. 7, 1786.

of Dublin from the Lord Mayor and Corporation to the Crown; that it laid the foundation of a new semi-military force which might prove very dangerous to liberty. The last argument when regarded in the light of modern experience will appear very futile, but apprehensions of this kind were long prevalent in England, and were often expressed in 1829, when Sir Robert Peel created a Metropolitan Police Force in London, placed under the control of two Government commissioners, and no longer dependent on parochial authority.

Grattan, while acknowledging that the old watchmen were thoroughly inefficient, and that a change in the machinery for enforcing the law was imperatively necessary, opposed strenuously the Government Bill. He believed that it was intended mainly to increase patronage, and that all the legitimate purposes of the measure could be attained without violating the charter or withdrawing its ancient privileges from the Corporation. It is difficult at this distance of time to pronounce with any confidence on the merits of the case. The dangers feared were no doubt exaggerated or chimerical, and the confidential correspondence of the Government seems to show that though they were not indifferent to the possibility of increasing their influence over the Dublin magistracy, they were at least animated by a genuine desire to repress lawlessness and crime.[1] It does not appear, however, that in this respect the police measure of 1786 had much effect. For a few months, it is true, there was some diminution of crime, but little more than a year had passed when petitions were presented by a great body of Dublin householders, asserting that the new police were as inefficient as the old watchmen, and that crime had fully regained its former level, while the expense of the police had trebled, and a great amount of purely corrupt expenditure had been incurred.[2]

[1] 'We have made a successful foundation, at least, to a scheme of effectual police in this capital, with some additions applicable to the country. We thought it right to begin with moderation, but we have established the principle, and obtained now, I trust, an influence in the magistracy of the city, which may be used to the most salutary purposes for the quiet and good order of the whole community. The opposition given to the Bill in the House of Commons has been chiefly confined to the extension of the influence of Government, and to the armed force with which they are to be entrusted.' Rutland to Sydney, March 31, 1786.

[2] See *Irish Parl. Deb.* viii. 248, 249, 340, 344. See, too, a very

The Whiteboy outrages, directed chiefly against tithes, but often taking the form of combinations for regulating the price of labour and lands, and the dues of the priesthood, raged fiercely during the later months of 1786 in several counties in the South of Ireland, and were accompanied by all the atrocities I have already described. At the end of January 1787, Fitzgibbon moved that further provisions by statute were indispensably necessary to prevent tumultuous risings and assemblies, and more effectually to punish persons guilty of outrage, riot, illegal combinations, and administering and taking unlawful oaths. Only a single dissentient voice was heard, and soon after, a very stringent Crimes Bill was carried through the House of Commons by 192 votes to 30. Grattan fully and emphatically admitted the necessity of fresh coercive legislation,[1] though he desired to introduce some slight mitigations into the Government Bill, and would have gladly confined its operation to the counties in which the outrages were taking place. On this point, however, he did not insist, but he strongly opposed and ultimately obtained the withdrawal of a clause in Fitzgibbon's scheme, which would probably have converted the Whiteboy movement into a religious war. It provided that if it were established by the evidence of a single witness that an illegal oath had been tendered in, or adjoining to, a popish chapel, that chapel should be at once destroyed, and its materials sold, and that if within the space of three years any new Catholic place of worship was erected in the same parish it also should be destroyed.[2]

The Act, as it was carried, made all persons who administered illegal oaths liable to transportation for life, and all who took them without compulsion, to transportation for seven years; it made most forms of Whiteboy outrage, including the unlawful

curious report by a parliamentary committee on the subject, in Plowden, append. lxxxii. The committee found, among other things, that the police charge for stationery in two and a half years was 3,316*l.* 6*s.* 6½*d.* Of this more than 150*l.* was said to have been paid for gilt paper, and 49*l.* 8*s.* 8*d.* for sealing wax. The wretched character of the Dublin police was noticed by Sir Richard Hoare in his *Tour in Ireland in* 1806, p. 300.

[1] 'The necessity of coercion was universally admitted, and Mr. Grattan, in particular, very strongly urged the principle as essential to the prosperity of the country. He and Mr. Brownlow were tellers for the majority, and the Bill was supported by great numbers of the independent country gentlemen, among whom was Mr. Conolly.' Orde to Nepean, Feb. 19, 1787. See, too, Grattan's *Speeches*, ii. 7, 8.

[2] Grattan's *Life*, iii. 283–287.

seizure of arms, levying contributions by force and intimidation, and even publishing notices tending to produce riots or unlawful combinations, capital offences, and it introduced into Ireland the provisions of the English Riot Act. This part of the measure excited considerable debate, and although Grattan acknowledged its necessity,[1] it was much opposed by several members, and especially by Forbes. He read to the House the well-known passage in which Blackstone described the English Riot Act as a vast acquisition of force to the Crown, and he then enumerated the many English Acts passed since the Revolution to restrain undue influence—the Bill of Rights, the Act for excluding pensioners and placemen from the House of Commons, the Act for limiting the civil list, the Nullum Tempus Act, the Acts for preventing revenue officers from voting at elections, for excluding contractors from the House of Commons, and for limiting the amount of the pension list. 'He observed that not one of those laws was to be found in the Irish Statute-book, and asked whether members could reconcile it with their duty to give this vast acquisition of force to the Crown, without enacting at the same time those laws which the wisdom of the Legislature of England had provided against its abuse and encroachments.'[2] The measure, however, at last passed with little dissent, though Fitzgibbon, at the suggestion of Grattan, consented to limit its operation to three years.[3]

The Whiteboy Act of 1787 is another of the many examples of the prompt and energetic manner in which the Irish Parliament never hesitated to deal with epidemics of outrage. Fitzgibbon complained, however, that much of the evil was due to the supineness and sometimes even to the connivance of magistrates, and he alleged that they were prone on the slightest occasion to call for military assistance. An important Act 'for the better execution of the law' was carried in this year, for reforming the magistracy and establishing throughout the country a constabulary appointed by the grand juries but under the direction of peace officers appointed by the Crown.[4]

But while Grattan warmly supported the Government in measures for the suppression of disorder and crime, he maintained that it was equally imperative for the Parliament to deal with

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* vii. 180, 227.
[2] Ibid. vii. 210.
[3] 27 Geo. III. c. 15.
[4] Ibid. c. 40.

those great evils from which Irish crime principally sprang. The enormous absurdity, injustice, and inequality of the Irish tithe system has been explained in a former chapter, and tithes and the tithe proctor were the chief cause of the Whiteboy disturbances which were spreading every kind of evil and disaster over a great part of Ireland. Pitt with the instinct of a true statesman had expressed his wish, as early as 1786, that tithes in Ireland should be commuted into a money rate, levied on the tenants of the parish, regulated by the price of corn and calculated on an average of several years.[1] But although many of the poorer clergy would have gladly accepted such a plan, and although in the opinion of Rutland the majority of the laity 'were opposed to tithes and strong advocates for some settlement,' the bishops 'considered any settlement as a direct attack on their most ancient rights and as a commencement of the ruin of the Establishment;'[2] and the Irish Government, discarding the advice of Pitt, obstinately resisted every attempt to modify the offensive system. Grattan had mastered the subject in its minutest details, and in 1787, in 1788, and in 1789 he brought it forward in speeches which were among the greatest he ever delivered, suggesting as alternative and slightly varying plans to pay the clergy a sum calculated on the average of several years and raised by applotment like other county charges; to institute a general modus in lieu of tithes; to make a commutation by a general survey of every county, allowing a specified sum for every acre in tillage, and making the whole county security for the clergymen. These plans were in principle very similar to the suggestion of Pitt, and in addition to their other advantages they might have made the collection of tithes by the resident clergy so simple and easy that the whole race of tithe farmers and proctors would have gradually disappeared. Grattan also proposed that lands which had been barren should for a certain time after their reclamation be exempt from tithes; that the partial or complete exemption of potatoes and linen, which existed in some parts of the kingdom, should be extended to the whole; and that a moderate tax should be imposed on the non-residence of the clergy.[3] The exemption of barren lands from

[1] Pitt to Rutland, Nov. 7, 1786.
[2] Rutland to Pitt, Sept. 13, 1786.
[3] Grattan's *Life*, iii. 317–335.

tithes was approved of by Fitzgibbon,[1] and although it was for some years rejected on account of the opposition of the clergy, it was ultimately carried. But the other proposals of Grattan were met by an obstinate resistance. Fitzgibbon and the majority which he led, refused even to grant a committee to investigate the subject, and the Irish tithe system continued to be the chief source of Irish crime till the Commutation Act of Lord John Russell in 1838.

The persistent refusal of the Irish Parliament to rectify or mitigate this class of abuses appears to me the gravest of all the many reproaches that may be brought against it. Although about seven-eighths of the nation dissented from the established religion, the general principle of a Protestant establishment had as yet very few enemies; but the existing tithe system was detested both by the Catholics and the Protestant Dissenters, and it was exceedingly unpopular among the smaller landed gentry. Its inequalities and injustices were too glaring for any plausible defence, and the language of Pitt seems to show that England would have placed no obstacle in the way of redress. How possible it was to cure the evil without destroying the Establishment was abundantly shown by the Act of 1838. That Act, which commuted tithes into a land tax paid by the landlord with a deduction of twenty-five per cent. for the cost of collection, is probably the most successful remedial measure in all Irish history. It proved a great benefit to the Protestant clergy, and it at the same time completely staunched an old source of disorder and crime, and effected a profound and immediate change in the feelings of men. Very few political measures have ever effected so much good without producing any countervailing evil. The Irish Church when it was supported by tithes was the most unpopular ecclesiastical establishment in Europe, and it kept the country in a condition verging on civil war. After the commutation of tithes nearly all active hostility to it disappeared. The Church question speedily became indifferent to the great mass of the people; the Protestant clergy were a beneficent and usually a popular element in Irish society, and the measure which finally disendowed them was much more due to the exigencies of English party politics than to any genuine

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* ix. 435, xi. 344.

pressure of Irish opinion. But no such measure as that of 1838 could be carried in the Irish Parliament, and in the last ten years of its existence even Grattan desisted from efforts which were manifestly hopeless. Yet at no time had the question been more important. Resistance to the exaction of tithes was year by year strengthening habits of outrage and lawless combination, and in the hope of abolishing the tithes the Irish Jacobins found the best means of acting upon the passions of the nation.

But whatever social or agrarian disturbances may have existed in the remoter counties, the political condition of Ireland in the closing period of the administration of Rutland presented an aspect of almost absolute calm. Prosperity was advancing with rapid strides. The credit of the nation was re-established. Both the young Viceroy and his beautiful Duchess were extremely popular. A gay, brilliant, and dissipated court drew men of many opinions within its circle or its influence, and political tension had almost wholly ceased. Forbes, it is true, and the little group of independent members whom he represented, brought in motion after motion, condemning the increasing pension list, and the multiplication of places; but they were easily defeated in Parliament, and they were supported by no strong opinion beyond its walls. The distress which had formerly stimulated discontent was no longer acute. The annual deficit had disappeared. Financial measures, which will be hereafter related, lightened the burden of debt, and an extensive system of education was promised. The confidential letters of Rutland and of his secretary in the latter period of the administration, form a curious contrast to the anxious and agitated letters that issued from the Castle during the administrations of Buckinghamshire, Carlisle, Portland, and Temple. Thus in February 1786, Rutland in a letter largely devoted to a description of the outrages of the Whiteboys in Munster says, 'The state of this country, as far as regards the proceedings of Parliament, affords a prospect highly promising and satisfactory. The most important money Bills have passed the Commons without any material opposition, and scarcely a troubled wave appears upon the political surface.'[1] A year later, when the

[1] Rutland to Sydney (secret and confidential), Feb. 27, 1786.

Government introduced its very stringent coercive legislation for the suppression of the Whiteboys, the Parliament responded with an alacrity which at once surprised and delighted the Chief Secretary. 'We have succeeded wonderfully,' he wrote, 'in our first measure, of amending the laws against riot and unlawful combination. It would not have been supposed possible even three years ago to have obtained almost unanimity in the House of Commons to pass a Bill of coercion upon the groundwork of the English Riot Act. . . . I am confident that this circumstance alone, as an indication of the determination of the Legislature to strengthen the hands of Executive Government, will go far to quiet the disturbance throughout the kingdom.'[1] 'I am highly ambitious,' wrote Rutland, a few months later, 'to see this nation prosper under the auspices of my administration of the King's Government; to find it of weight in the general scale, and become a source of strength to the Empire. A Riot Act, an optional police to be applied when it may be adjudged necessary, an extensive and well-considered system of education, which, I trust, will be carried into execution in the ensuing session, together with the adoption of the British Navigation Act, are measures of no inconsiderable moment and importance to the general welfare. The country for the present is for the most part free from commotion, except in the county of Cork, where some slight indications of discontent appear, but even these are merely partial and local.'[2]

On October 24, 1787, a short fever, accelerated, it is said, by convivial habits, carried off the Duke of Rutland in the thirty-fourth year of his age, and terminated a viceroyalty which had been singularly prosperous. Lord Temple, who had now become Marquis of Buckingham, succeeded him, and arrived in Dublin in December. His short viceroyalty in 1783 had given him some Irish experience, and it was thought that the fact that his wife was a Catholic might give him some popularity. With considerable business talents, however, the new Lord-Lieutenant was one of those men who in all the relations of life seldom

[1] Orde to Nepean, Feb. 24, 1787.

[2] Rutland to Sydney (private), May 31, 1787. A little later, after a journey in the North, he writes: 'Your lordship will receive much satisfaction in being informed of the loyal and tranquil state, in which I have found the once factious and disturbed province of Ulster.' Aug. 10, 1787.

fail to create friction and irritation. Great haughtiness, both of character and manner; extreme jealousy and proneness to take offence, had always characterised him; and before he had been many months in Ireland we find him threatening his resignation, bitterly offended with the King, angry and discontented with the Ministers in England, and very unpopular in Dublin.[1] He instituted with commendable energy inquiries into peculations of clerks and other subaltern officers of the Government, and succeeded in detecting much petty fraud which had been long practised with impunity; but corruption in the higher forms of government showed no tendency to diminish. Salaries were increased. At least one obsolete office was speedily revived. The measures of economy that were introduced into Parliament were strenuously resisted, and the first session of Parliament was abruptly and prematurely shortened. An Irish pension of 1,700*l.* a year given to Orde, who had now retired from the office of Chief Secretary, and whose health was much broken, was attacked with reason as a violation of the assurance on the strength of which Parliament had consented a few years before to increase the salary of that office; and an appointment was soon after made which excited the strongest indignation.

I have mentioned the anxiety of all parties in Ireland to bring back to the country the great offices which were held by absentees. Rutland, shortly before his death, had tried to induce Pitt to make an arrangement for the restoration of the Vice-Treasurers to Ireland. It would, he said, be 'an object of great utility to his Majesty's Irish Government, both as a measure calculated to fasten on popularity, and at the same time as uniting the more solid advantage of creating new objects for ambition of the first men and the most extensive connections in this country.'[2] Pitt was unable or unwilling to consent, but shortly after the appointment of Buckingham the death of Rigby made it possible to bring back the important office of Master of the Rolls. The office, however, was coveted by William Grenville, the brother of the Lord-Lieutenant, who was now President of the Board of Trade in England. His letters on the subject are curious, and far from edifying.[3] He

[1] See his letters in Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, vol. i.

[2] Rutland to Pitt, Sept. 13, 1786.

[3] They will be found in Bucking-

found that part of the revenue which Rigby had received was derived from an illegal sale of places. He doubted whether the office could he legally granted for life, and whether the performance of certain duties might not be required, and for these and some other reasons he at last determined to relinquish it to the Duke of Leinster, but asked and obtained for himself the best Irish reversion—that of the office of Chief Remembrancer, which was held by Lord Clanbrassil.[1] An appointment so flagrantly improper completely discredited Buckingham at the outset of his administration, and it was well fitted to exasperate equally both the most selfish and the most disinterested of Irish politicians.

The unpopularity of the Lord-Lieutenant was, however, chiefly personal, and confined to a small court or political circle. The country continued perfectly quiet. The alarm which was felt in the closing months of 1787, when the complications in Holland made war with France extremely probable, did not create the smallest disturbance. Recruiting was actively and successfully carried on, and the regiments on the establishment were raised to their full strength. Although combinations against tithes continued and a measure granting compensation to defrauded clergymen was renewed, the new Secretary, Fitzherbert, was able to write that the commotion in the South had ceased.[2] The credit of the country had never been better, and the chief votes of supply passed without a division. Lord Lifford, who had been Irish Chancellor since 1767, wrote to Buckingham in August 1788, that he had never in his long experience known Ireland so quiet.[3]

It must be added that one other important question of patronage was pending. Lord Lifford was old and broken, and he desired to resign the seals. Although most of the judgeships were now given to Irishmen, no Irishman had yet been appointed Chancellor, but Fitzgibbon the Attorney-General strongly urged his claims. He went over to England to press them, but did not

ham's *Courts and Cabinets*, i. 365–387.

[1] Parsons, who in 1788 was in violent opposition to Grattan, attempted to defend this job in Parliament on the ingenious ground that William Grenville was the English statesman to whom Ireland owed most, as it was he who had introduced the Renunciation Bill and thus established the independence of the Irish Parliament, which Grattan had left precarious and unfinished. See *Irish Parl. Deb.* ix. 256

[2] Fitzherbert to Nepean, Jan. 30, 1788.

[3] Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, i. 422.

succeed in obtaining any promise from Pitt, and he appears to have somewhat irritated the not very patient Viceroy by his many letters on the subject.[1] The matter, however, was still unsettled when the great question of the Regency arose and suddenly changed the whole aspect of Irish politics.

This question, indeed, was well fitted to strain seriously the constitutional relations between the two countries. The King was incapacitated by madness. No provision had been made for carrying on the Government, and it remained to reconstruct and to determine the first estate in the realm.[2] The event was one absolutely unprovided for by law. There was no real precedent to guide the decision. It was only possible to argue the question from the general principles of the Constitution and from very distant and imperfect analogies, and the real influences which shaped and guided the arguments of lawyers and statesmen were of a party nature. The King was warmly attached to his present Ministers. The Prince of Wales was closely connected with the Whigs, and would probably transfer the reins of government to their hands.

I have already related at some length the discussions on the subject in England, but in order to make the Irish aspects of this important question perfectly clear, I must now ask the reader to excuse some considerable repetition.

Two opposing theories, as we have seen, confronted one another. Pitt maintained that during the lifetime of the King he and he only was on the throne, that as he was incapacitated by illness it devolved upon the other two branches of the Legislature to provide for the government of the country ; that Parliament had a right to select the Regent, and to define and limit his powers, and that they should exercise this right in such a manner that the Sovereign on his recovery should find his power and patronage as little as possible impaired during his illness, and be able without difficulty to resume the full direction of affairs. Fox, on the other hand, maintained that the English monarchy being hereditary and not elective, and the eldest son

[1] Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, i. 424–426.

[2] I have already mentioned that in the Regency debates in England, as well as in Ireland, the King was uniformly spoken of as 'the first estate of the realm,' and I have, therefore, retained the language of the time, although it is not, strictly speaking, accurate.

of the King being of age, he had a right to enter into the full exercise of the royal power during the incapacity of his father, but that the two Houses of Parliament as the organs of the nation were alone entitled to pronounce when the Prince ought to take upon him this power.

As it was ultimately admitted by Pitt that the moral claim of the Prince of Wales to exercise the office of Regent was overwhelming, and by Fox that he could not assume this office without the sanction and invitation of the two Houses of Parliament, the real difference on this point between the two rivals lay within narrow limits. Both parties, again, agreed that the Regent should have full right of changing the Ministry and calling such statesmen as he pleased to the helm. Fox considered such a right to be inherent to his position; Pitt contended that it should be conferred on him by legislation; but both statesmen admitted that he should have it. The essential question at issue was the question of limitations. Fox maintained that the condition of the King gave the Prince of Wales the right of exercising while Regent the full royal power. Pitt, on the other hand, maintaining that the temporary exercise of royal authority was essentially different from the possession of the throne, contended that Parliament, while granting such powers as were necessary for this temporary administration, should leave the custody of the royal person and the appointment of the royal household in the hands of the Queen, and should strictly limit the power of the Regent to grant peerages, offices in reversion and pensions, and to dispose of the real and personal property of the King.

On this point there was one serious difficulty to be encountered by Pitt from which the theory of Fox was exempt. If the Prince had an inherent right to assume the royal power in all its plenitude, it was a simple thing for the two Houses to carry an address inviting him to do so. But if limitations were to be imposed and a form of government was to be constructed, this could only be done by Act of Parliament, and no Act of Parliament could exist without the royal assent. Scott, however, who was then the chief law officer in England, devised a legal fiction for surmounting the difficulty. He maintained that a commission might be appointed by the two Houses for the purpose of keep-

ing that Great Seal the impress of which was the formal expression of the King's assent; that this commission might be assumed to act as the representative and by the direction of the King, and that under this fictitious authority it might affix the Great Seal and give validity to the Regency Bill. Probably if no party motive had been aroused, and if Parliament had not determined in accordance with the general wishes of the people that it was desirable that the power of the Regent should be limited, such an expedient would have been rejected as equally ridiculous and illegal; but as there appeared to be no other way of limiting the Regency, the plan was adopted by large majorities in the English Parliament.

It is easy to see how perplexing the doctrine of Pitt must have been to the strenuous supporters of Irish parliamentary independence. Their fundamental doctrine was that the Crown alone was the link between the two countries, and that the British Parliament had no authority whatever over Ireland or the Irish Parliament; but they were now told that in consequence of the incapacity of the King, it was for the British Parliament to create the temporary sovereign whom they were to obey, and to define the powers which he was to exercise. The views of the independent party in Ireland naturally coincided with the doctrine of Fox as the one which was the most consistent with their own Constitution, and several other motives acted in the same direction. The administration of Lord Buckingham had become unpopular. The feeling of personal loyalty which was very strong in Ireland was shocked by the restrictions imposed by the English Minister on the heir to the crown. Some men were not insensible to the charm of asserting for Ireland the right to pursue a separate line of policy on a question of great constitutional importance, while many others thought they saw an approaching change in the source of patronage, and were eager to be among the first to win the favour of the coming ruler. It was generally believed that the King would be unable to resume the royal authority, and the chief borough interests, which had long been almost passive in the hands of the Ministers, began to gravitate rapidly towards the new planet which seemed mounting above the horizon. The great interests of Shannon, Leinster, Tyrone, and Drogheda passed speedily into

opposition and at once changed the balance of power; and the experience and debating power of Ponsonby and Hely Hutchinson were soon found on the same side.

It would be idle to suppose that the great mass of placemen and nominees who had so long been the docile servants of administration were animated by any other than purely selfish motives; but no one who has studied the history of the time will attribute such motives to Grattan and Charlemont. The main reason for their conduct lies, I think, on the surface. The Whig doctrine of the Regency was, beyond all question, more in harmony with the Constitution of 1782 than the doctrine of the Government. There were, however, other considerations which influenced them. A strong political and personal sympathy had long attached them to the Whig leaders in England, and on the eve of the Regency debates, an assurance appears to have been given to Grattan that in the event of a Regency the Government in Ireland would be changed, and that the new Government would accept and carry through some of those measures of reform which Grattan had so long unsuccessfully advocated as indispensably necessary to put an end to the reign of corruption in Ireland, and to make the Irish Parliament a real reflex of the educated opinion of the nation.[1]

The Irish Parliament was not sitting when the English Parliament began the discussions on the Regency question, and as the incapacity of the Sovereign caused much less embarrassment in Ireland than in England owing to the large powers possessed by the Lord-Lieutenant, it was especially unfortunate that the unexpected prolongation of the debates in England and the approaching expiration of some essential laws in Ireland, made it necessary to assemble the Irish Parliament before the question had been determined in England. At first the Lord-Lieutenant believed that he could secure a large majority for the English plan, and that only a small section of the Irish

[1] See Grattan's *Life*, iii. 367, 372–375. After the conflict was over Lord Buckingham wrote, 'Your lordship will be surprised to hear that the engagements with the English opposition tended to a system of mischief, which I hope was not completely foreseen by those who framed this measure; for I do not hesitate to say that such a combination as had existed in this kingdom for the last three months, supported from Great Britain, under the circumstances of the present times and urging on the popular frenzy, would have completely overthrown every appearance of government in Ireland.' Buckingham to Sydney, March 23, 1789.

Parliament wished to proceed by address.[1] But gradually his confidence diminished, and the week before Parliament met, the Chief Secretary wrote to the Government in a strain of great and evident mortification. 'The specific assurances of support,' he said, 'upon which alone I could form any opinion of the strength of the Government in Parliament, have in the course of the last three days been withdrawn in so many quarters where from every consideration I could least expect it, that I have very little hope to be able to stem on February 5 the address which will be moved by both Houses to his Royal Highness to take upon himself the Regency of this kingdom.'[2] When Parliament met, it was at once seen that the most important of the great interests in both Houses, many men who were in high employment under the Crown, and also the popular party directed by Grattan were resolved to act at once. A motion to postpone the question till the English Parliament had decided on the Regent was rejected by 128 to 74. The plan of proceeding by Bill, which was proposed by the Government, was rejected; and after a long debate, and chiefly under the guidance of Grattan, both Houses of Parliament agreed to address the Prince of Wales to take upon himself 'the government of this nation during the continuation of his Majesty's present indisposition, and no longer; and under the style and title of Prince Regent of Ireland, in the name and on the behalf of his Majesty, to exercise and administer, according to the laws and Constitution of this kingdom, all regal powers, jurisdiction, and prerogatives, to the Crown and Government thereof belonging.'

It is worthy of notice that in the Irish debates the question of limitations, which was so prominent in England, was thrown completely into the background. It was asserted by Grattan, and it was fully acknowledged on the part of the Government, that the restrictions which were necessary in England were immaterial in Ireland, and that there was no insuperable difficulty in the Regent exercising different degrees of power in the

[1] Buckingham to Sydney, Nov. 23, 1788; Jan. 10, 1789.

[2] Fitzherbert to Nepean, Jan. 29, 1789. 'The union of most of the great connections in this kingdom has left me no hope of a majority on the Regency question, except those which are founded on the expectation that some of the independent and unconnected members in both Houses, who usually vote against Government, may in the present instance be induced to support it.' Buckingham to Sydney, Jan. 29, 1789.

two countries.[1] The real question at issue was whether, under the peculiar circumstances of the Constitution of Ireland and the connection of the two crowns, the proper mode of investing the Prince of Wales with the Regency was by address or by Bill. Grattan and those who agreed with him in adopting the former alternative, argued, like the English Whigs, that it was impossible to legislate with only two estates of the realm, and that, therefore, the creation or recognition of a third estate was the indispensable precursor of every act of legislation. They treated the Commission appointed in England to guard the Great Seal and represent the royal person, as a pure phantom, and the Great Seal of England as of no importance except as authenticating and attesting the royal volition and assent. They urged that the English Parliament, in attempting to deal with the question in the way of legislation, and in inventing a fictitious royal assent, had been actuated by a desire to restrict the power of the Regent, and that this end was confessedly of no moment in Ireland. They acknowledged that the crowns of England and Ireland were indissolubly connected, but they utterly denied that an English Regent made by an English statute could have any authority in Ireland unless he was also made Regent by the Irish Parliament; and they accordingly contended that the proposed method of proceeding by a Bill which was to become an Act of Parliament by the assent of a Regent of Great Britain, elected by the British Parliament, and as yet unrecognised by the Irish Parliament, was directly opposed to the Constitution of 1782. Ireland was acknowledged to be independent of the British Parliament, and therefore, now that the supreme authority was eclipsed, the Irish Parliament, without reference to the proceedings, without waiting for the decision

[1] 'If you make the Prince of Wales your Regent and grant him the plenitude of power, in God's name let it be done by Bill; otherwise I see such danger that I deprecate the measure proposed. . . . I abominate the idea of restraining the Prince Regent in the power of making peers in this country, or in limiting him in the power of making grants on the narrow principles of suspicion and distrust. This is a question which rests upon very different ground in this country from that on which it has been taken up in England; and if gentlemen can reconcile to themselves a precedent for adopting in this country a different form of executive government from that established in England, I have not the smallest apprehension that the powers which may be committed to the Prince of Wales by the Parliament of Ireland will be abused by him.' Speech of Fitzgibbon, *Irish Parl. Debates*, ix. 53, 54.

of the British Parliament, called upon the eldest son of the Sovereign, who had already declared his willingness to accept the Regency of Great Britain,[1] to assume the full power and prerogatives of the Crown in Ireland.

The address was copied from that of the two English Houses inviting William of Orange to take upon himself the conduct of affairs. 'There are points,' Grattan said, 'in which the Revolution bears a near resemblance to the present period, as there are others in which it is not only different but opposite. The throne being full and the political power of the King existing, the power of the two Houses cannot be applied to that part of the monarchical condition; but the personal capacity of the King, or rather the personal exercise of the royal power, being deficient, the laws of the land not having in the ordinary course of law made provision for that deficiency, and one of the estates being incapable, it remains with the two others to administer the remedy by their own authority. The principle of your interference is established by the Revolution; the operation of that principle is limited by the contingency.' In this case there was, at least, no dispute about persons. The same person was acknowledged to be the one possible Regent in both countries, and that person was the heir to the throne.

It is remarkable, however, that Grattan carefully abstained from committing himself to the unpopular doctrine of Fox that the Prince of Wales, when of full age, had such an inherent right to the exercise of the royal power, that the function of Parliament in the matter was a function not of choice, but of adjudication. This doctrine was considered by the English Whigs, and, as it appears to me, with good reason, logically essential to their case. Grattan carefully avoided any distinct statement on the question of right. He spoke only of 'the irresistible claim' of the Prince. He based his argument for proceeding by address, on the ground that this is the natural method of proceeding when the third estate is incapable of acting, and that the supposed necessity of imposing restrictions on the Regency, which induced the British Parliament to adopt a different course, did not exist in Ireland. He never distinctly denied the validity of the proceedings of the British Parliament. He denied only that a Regency Bill which passed the two Irish Houses could

[1] See his answer to the Committees of the British Houses, Jan. 30, 1789.

become a valid Irish law by the assent of a Regent whose authority was based upon an English statute, and who was still unrecognised by the Irish Parliament. Curran and Hutchinson, indeed, strongly and ably supported the full doctrine of Fox, but much of the language of Grattan bore more resemblance to that of Pitt; and he seems to have thought it possible to take an intermediate position between the two parties in England. 'The method,' he said, 'whereby I propose these great assemblies shall supply this deficiency is—address. There are two ways of proceeding—one is by way of legislation, the other by address. When they proceed by way of legislation, it is on the supposition of a third estate in a capacity to act; but address is a mode exclusively their own, and complete without the interference of a third estate. It is that known parliamentary method by which the two Houses exercise those powers to which they are jointly competent. Therefore it is I submit to you the mode by address, as the most proper for supplying the present deficiency; and although the address shall on this occasion have all the force and operation of law, yet still that force and operation arise from the necessity of the case and are confined to it. . . . But as addresses of Parliament, though competent, in the event of such a deficiency, to create an efficient third estate, yet do not, and cannot with propriety, annex to their act the forms of law and stamp of legislation, it is thought advisable, after the acceptance of the Regency, that there should be an Act passed reciting the deficiency in the personal exercise of the royal power, and of his Royal Highness's acceptance of the Regency of this realm, at the instance and desire of the two Houses of the Irish Parliament; and further to declare and enact that he is and shall be Regent thereof during the continuance of his Majesty's present indisposition. The terms of the Act are to describe the powers of the Regent, and the power intended is the personal exercise of the full regal authority; and the reason why plenitude of the regal power is intended by the address, and afterwards by the Bill, is to be found in the nature of the prerogative, which was given not for the sake of the King but of the people. . . . We know of no political reason why the prerogatives in question should be destroyed, nor any personal reason why they should be suspended.'

Such were the arguments of Grattan. In opposition to them Fitzgibbon, in speeches of admirable subtlety and power, but now for the first time supported only by a small minority in Parliament, maintained the doctrine which had been accepted in England. A simple address of two Houses of Parliament could not possibly give the Prince of Wales the royal authority if he did not already by right possess it, and to assert that he did possess it was treason, for it was to assert that George III. was no longer on the throne. This argument was common to both countries, but there were others which applied especially to Ireland. The most powerful was derived from an Act which had been drawn up by Yelverton and carried in 1782, and which defined the manner in which the royal assent should be given in Ireland. The object of this Act was to put an end to the practice of altering Irish Bills in the Privy Council. It provided that all Irish Bills, after passing through the Irish Parliament, should be sent under the Great Seal of Ireland to England; that they should be returned without alteration to Ireland under the Great Seal of England, and that the Lord-Lieutenant should be then empowered to give them the royal assent.[1] No Irish Bill, therefore, could become law without the Great Seal of England, but the Irish Parliament had no control whatever over that seal, and could, therefore, take no steps in appointing a Regent until the British Parliament had definitely decided in whose hands that seal should be placed. No Regent appointed by the Irish Parliament could convert an Irish Bill into a law without this seal, which was for the present at the disposal of the British Parliament. 'Were the King of England and Ireland,' said Fitzgibbon, 'to come here in person and to reside, he could not pass a Bill without its being first certified to his Regent in England, who must return it under the Great Seal of that kingdom before his Majesty could even in person assent to it.' The Great Seal of England on Irish

[1] 21 & 22 Geo. III. c. 47. Another clause of the Act provided that no Parliament could be held in Ireland until a licence had been obtained from his Majesty under the Great Seal of Great Britain. It appears to me very doubtful whether the use of either seal in this transaction, meant more than a formal attestation of the genuineness of the documents that passed from country to country. See, however, on the importance of different seals in establishing ministerial responsibility, the remarks of Mr. Dicey, *The Law of the Constitution*, pp. 332–335.

Bills is the bond of union and connection with England, and anyone who disputes its necessity, contradicts the direct letter of the law and weakens the essential security of the connection. Since the Constitution of 1782 the union of the supreme Executives of the two nations alone connects them, and whoever tampers with, impairs, or dissolves that union is preparing the way for separation. It is at least conceivable that the Prince of Wales might at the last moment decline the restricted Regency of England, and in that case the supreme executive powers of England and Ireland would be completely separated. 'It is a wise maxim,' said Fitzgibbon, 'for this country always to concur with the Parliament of Great Britain, unless for very strong reasons indeed we are obliged to differ from it. . . . Constituted as it is, the Government of this country never can go on unless we follow Great Britain implicitly in all regulations of Imperial policy. The independence of your Parliament is your freedom; your dependence on the Crown of England is your security for that freedom; and gentlemen who profess themselves this night advocates for the independence of the Irish Crown are advocates for its separation from England.' 'The only security of your liberty is your connection with Great Britain, and gentlemen who risk breaking the connection must make up their minds to a union. God forbid that I should ever see that day; but if ever the day in which a separation shall be attempted may come, I shall not hesitate to embrace a union rather than a separation.' 'What, then, have we to do? As soon as we shall be certified that the Prince of Wales is invested with the authority of Regent in England, pass an Act to invest him with that authority in Ireland; send this Act to the Prince Regent in England; he will then have the command of the Great Seal of England, and will return our Act authenticated according to law. His Lord-Lieutenant may then, by his command, give the royal assent to it; and who shall say that it is not a law of the land?'

Such, as fully as I can state them, were the leading arguments advanced upon each side of the controversy. It is my own opinion that the constitutional importance of the question, its danger, and its significance were all grossly exaggerated by party spirit at the time, and have been not a little magnified

by succeeding historians. It appears evident that the case was so new and unprecedented that no course could possibly have been taken without straining or violating some part of the Constitution. It was an illegal thing for the Irish Parliament under any possible circumstances to deny the necessity of the Great Seal of England for the validity of Irish Acts, and for the Parliament of either country to assume that George III. was no longer on the throne; but it was an act of at least equal violence to create by parliamentary action a fictitious royal assent, to frame during the monarch's incapacity a new Constitution fundamentally different from hereditary monarchy, and to make the exercise of monarchical functions subject to election. In the words of a great lawyer, 'the phantom of a commission issued by an incapable King, to confer upon what the other branches of the Legislature had proposed, the outward semblance of a statute passed by all the three, was an outrage upon all constitutional principle, and, indeed, upon the common sense of mankind, yet more extravagant than the elective nature of the whole process.'[1] The doctrine of Scott that the Great Seal makes the assent of the Crown complete in law, though the Sovereign may be incapable of giving any warrant for affixing it, was certainly far more inconsistent with the principles of monarchy than the doctrine of Grattan, that the essence of the consent of the Crown is the volition of the Sovereign, and that the Great Seal has no value except as attesting and authenticating it. The former doctrine might be extended not only to an infant or lunatic king, but to a king who was a prisoner in the hands of rebels. It virtually substituted a seal for a monarch, and it reduced the place of royalty in the Constitution to complete insignificance.

But if, putting aside the metaphysics of the Constitution, we judge the question on the grounds of political expediency, I cannot see that any real evil would have ensued if the Irish

[1] Brougham's *Statesmen of George III.: Lord Loughborough*. Another great legal authority writes, 'After the consideration I have repeatedly given to the subject I must ever think that the Irish Parliament proceeded more constitutionally, by considering that the heir apparent was entitled to exercise the royal authority during the King's incapacity as upon a demise of the Crown, and by presenting an address to him praying him to do so, instead of arrogating to themselves, in Polish fashion, the power of electing the supreme magistrate of the Republic, and resorting to the palpable lie, of the proceeding being sanctioned by the afflicted Sovereign.' Lord Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, ix. 185.

Parliament, under the very exceptional and embarrassing circumstances of the case, had delayed its proceedings till the English Parliament had finally and irrevocably determined the Regency of England. Such a course would probably have averted all serious difference between the two countries, prevented all danger of a separation of the Executives, and destroyed the force of nearly all the arguments which were directed against the Irish proceedings. The conduct of Grattan and Charlemont on this question appears to me to have shown an exaggerated sensitiveness about the Constitution, and an exaggerated jealousy of the English Parliament; and the feverish impatience with which Grattan pushed on the question, and insisted on the Irish Parliament committing itself before the British Parliament had completed its proceedings, seems to me the greatest political error of his life. It is always a dangerous thing in politics to push to its extreme limits logical reasoning drawn from the first principles of the Constitution, and it was truly said by Fox that a habit of speculating upon political systems was one of the great vices of Irish political thought. Much might be plausibly said in favour of the right of independent agency and option of the Irish Parliament on this important question, and on the principle of constitutional superiority which the Government plan would have recognised in the British Parliament; but it is probable that the wisest English statesmen, if they had been placed in the situation of Grattan, would have accepted some constitutional anomaly, rather than incur the great practical inconvenience of differing from England on an important Imperial question, and would have contented themselves with guarding by express resolutions against any dangerous inference that might be drawn from their act.

At the same time, while disagreeing from the course adopted by the Irish leaders, I am entirely unable to concur with those who have represented the action of the Irish Parliament as seriously endangering the connection. It is quite certain that none of the leading actors in Ireland were disloyal to that connection, and it appears to me to be absurd to suppose that a measure investing the acknowledged heir of the British throne with regal power in Ireland during the incapacity of his father, should have tended to produce a permanent separation of the

two countries. It was constantly repeated that under the Constitution of 1782 the hereditary monarchy was the sole bond of union, but in the difference between the two Parliaments it was the Irish Parliament which most exalted the principle of heredity, which was most anxious to preserve the executive power unimpaired in its prerogatives, and which formed the most modest estimate of the capacity of Parliament. It was morally certain that the same Regent would preside over both countries, though with slightly different powers. It is probable that if the Regency had continued, a change of ministers would in both countries have soon placed the executive and legislative powers in harmony. In the worst case, either the death or the recovery of the King, or a turn in his illness which made his recovery hopeless, would have replaced the two nations in their former relation, and an express enactment might then have been easily made preventing the possible recurrence of a difficulty which was serious only because it was unprovided for by law.

The difference, however, was for a short time very acute. The address of Parliament to the Prince of Wales was presented to the Lord-Lieutenant for transmission, but Buckingham refused to lay before the Prince a document 'purporting to invest his Royal Highness with the power to take upon him the government of this realm before he should be enabled by law to do so,' and the Government in England strongly approved of the decision. They maintained, in the words of Sydney, 'that his Royal Highness cannot lawfully take upon him the administration of any part of the King's authority or the government of any of his Majesty's dominions till he is enabled by an Act of Parliament so to do, and that no Act of the Irish Parliament for that or any other purpose can be passed except by the royal assent, given to it under the Great Seal of Great Britain; . . . that the importance of this principle is the more manifest in this particular case, as the violation of it has an evident tendency to dissolve the constitutional union of the Executive Government of the two kingdoms.'[1] Both Houses, however, passed votes of censure on the Lord-Lieutenant. In order to secure that Parliament should be sitting during the continuation of the case, the chief supplies were only granted for two months,

[1] Sydney to Buckingham, Feb. 21, 1789.

and the two Houses appointed six commissioners, including the Duke of Leinster and Lord Charlemont, to present the address. They went to England and discharged their task, but at this critical moment the recovery of the King put an end to the question that was pending. 'I cannot attempt to describe to your lordship,' wrote Buckingham, 'the transport with which this communication has been received by all ranks of people, and, indeed, I should not do justice to the loyalty of this kingdom if I did not assure your lordship that they are truly grateful.' He speaks, however, bitterly of the opposition he had found from some of the great families, and adds significantly that 'such a combination ought to be broken,' that 'the aristocracy, which was broken under his Majesty's direction by Lord Townshend, will be again broken if it should be deemed necessary.' [1]

The episode was terminated. Most of the placemen and pensioners who had at first associated themselves in a bond against the Government, consented on a promise of amnesty to resume their places. Several, however, holding places valued at nearly 20,000*l.* a year were dismissed, and among the number were the Duke of Leinster and Ponsonby.[2] Corruption of the most wholesale description was again resorted to. Seven peers were created; nine others were promoted; several baronets were made; 13,000*l.* a year more was expended in pensions, and a crowd of new and often sinecure places were created. In a speech in the February of 1790, Grattan stated in Parliament that in the course of less than twelve months fourteen new parliamentary places and eight or nine parliamentary pensions had been created.[3] In the twenty years preceding 1790, the number of revived or new places and salaries created and held by members of Parliament was not less than forty, and in the House of Commons of 1790 no less than 108 members were either placemen or pensioners.[4] Lord Lifford, who had continued, at the wish of the Government, to hold the seals,[5] sent in his resignation, and died a few days later, and Fitzgibbon was rewarded for his recent services by the Chancellorship. He

[1] Buckingham to Sydney, Feb. 26, 1789.

[2] See the list in Grattan's *Life*, ii. 389, 390.

[3] Grattan's *Speeches*, ii. 243.

[4] Plowden, ii. 302.

[5] See Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, i. 426.

obtained it in spite of the opposition of Thurlow, who insisted that the post should still be reserved for Englishmen, and he was at once raised to the peerage as Baron Fitzgibbon. He was barely forty, but his great abilities both as lawyer and politician fully justified the appointment, and except where his furious personal antipathies and his ungovernable arrogance were called into action, he appears to have been an able, upright, and energetic judge. Buckingham warmly recommended him, describing him as an eminently 'honourable and valuable servant of the Crown,' whose 'parliamentary and legal careers have been marked by the most earnest and scrupulous attachment to the laws and practices of Great Britain both in Parliament and at the bar,' and by a wish to maintain that 'subordination to her Government and councils which are essential to the existence of Ireland.' 'The death of his eldest brother,' he continues, 'put him in the possession of a very large and affluent property, but he did not quit his profession,' and recalling the services of Fitzgibbon on the Regency question, the Viceroy expressed his belief that no Englishman would have ventured to take the part he did, and that as Chancellor, if such questions were renewed, he could do much more than an Englishman in the same position.[1] His influence was steadily employed in opposition to constitutional concession, and everything that could restrict corruption in the Irish Parliament was opposed. A place and pension Bill, and a Bill disfranchising revenue officers, were introduced and easily defeated, and all inquiries were refused that could lead to a detection of corruption.

Such were the last proceedings in the Irish Parliament, before the French Revolution burst upon Europe; and when we remember that the obstinate resistance to all attempts to reform and purify the House of Commons was coupled with an equally obstinate resistance to all attempts to modify the enormous grievance and injustice of the tithe system which pressed so heavily on the poor, it is easy to realise the fierce elements of combustion that were accumulating. Buckingham, however, did not remain to meet the storm. His health was

[1] Buckingham to Sydney, April 14, 1789. There are several letters on the subject in Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, vol. ii. A curious letter of Thurlow to Fitzgibbon on his appointment, will be found in O'Flanagan's *Lives of the Irish Chancellors*, ii. 201, 202.

broken and every vestige of popularity had gone. In April Fitzherbert resigned, and at the end of September Buckingham followed his example. On January 5, 1790, Lord Westmorland arrived in Dublin to succeed him.

One of the consequences of the conflict between the two Parliaments on the Regency question, and of the very exaggerated language that was used about the danger to the connection, was that Irish affairs now began to attract the serious attention of the French Government. Luzerne, the French ambassador in London, wrote two despatches in February 1789, in which he briefly mentioned the conflict and the growing reports that Ireland was tending more and more to separation from England, but expressed his own belief that such ideas can only have been adopted by a few wild enthusiasts, for Ireland was too weak to stand alone and was bound to England by irresistible commercial interests. A month later, however, the question seemed to him more serious, and he wrote a long and interesting despatch to his Government, relating in detail the Irish proceedings about the Regency. The conduct of the Irish Parliament seemed to him very unconstitutional. The claim it advanced went much beyond any it had before put forward, and tended directly to sunder the two Governments and crowns. It was greatly due to the personal unpopularity of the Lord-Lieutenant, who had shown himself at once haughty, harsh, and parsimonious, and in the bestowal of his patronage extremely corrupt. It was also, he thought, partly due to the fact 'that among the principal personages of that kingdom there is a very strong party which has always contemplated a separation sooner or later of Ireland from Great Britain.' 'This state of things,' he said, 'assuredly deserves our attention, and although Ireland is, in my opinion, still far from separating from England, such an event may be foreseen, and it ought not to come upon us by surprise.' He therefore strongly urged the French Foreign Office to send over a secret agent, and he designated the man who appeared to him most fitted for the task.

There was now in England an American merchant named Dr. Bancroft, a man of strong scientific tastes and an old and intimate friend of Franklin. In 1779, when there was a general belief in France, that Ireland was about to follow the example

of America, and that an Irish insurrection might assist France in her war, this man had been sent over by Vergennes on a secret mission. He had carefully studied the condition of Ireland on the spot, and he had come to the conclusion that, though there were decided principles of independence among the Irish, they had no settled plan and were much divided, and that nothing could be expected from insurrection. It was the report of Bancroft, corroborated by other information, that decided Vergennes to have no further dealings with disaffected Irishmen. Bancroft had recently returned to England, where he had many friends and was much respected, and he was on very intimate terms with Lord Camden. Luzerne had the highest opinion of his judgment and integrity. He believed him to be fitted beyond all other men to ascertain for the French Government what changes had taken place during the last ten years in Irish affairs, and he knew that he was ready to undertake the mission.

The reply of the French Minister was very cautious. 'I agree with you, sir,' he wrote, 'that the fermentation in Ireland may have serious consequences, and that whatever course the Ministry adopts, it is not likely to appease it; but I think at the same time that matters are not ripe for a mission, and that we must not in any way co-operate. Our secret would be assuredly discovered, and war would be the inevitable consequence of the slightest indiscretion. Moreover, sir, I have reason to believe that the hatred of the Irish for France is much stronger than their aversion to the English Government. This at least was the conclusion arrived at by Dr. Bancroft in the report which he drew up.' At the same time, the Minister added, circumstances may have changed, and it will certainly be useful to France to know the real dispositions of the Irish. The proposition of Luzerne was therefore accepted. He was authorised to send over Bancroft to Ireland, furnishing him with money and with verbal instructions, and to obtain from him on his return a detailed report; but he must be careful in no way to commit the Government to any line of action, and he was to take the utmost precaution that the affair should not be known.

This was probably the first step of a series of French dealings with Ireland, which a few years later assumed a grave

importance. 'Perhaps,' wrote Luzerne, 'the condition of Ireland is the only great obstacle the Ministry is about to encounter in its views of ambition, and in the intrigues which it is designing on the Continent.'[1]

The period of history which has been recounted in this chapter, though in many ways chequered, was on the whole one of great and growing prosperity. From the time when commercial liberty was restored, till the outburst of the rebellion of 1798, we have decisive evidence that the material condition of Ireland was steadily improving, though she still ranked far behind England in capital, industrial skill, and industrial habits. One of the most important evidences that can be adduced of the character of a Government and of the true condition of a country, is to be found in the state of its public credit, and a careful examination of that of Ireland will furnish some conclusions which may, I think, be surprising to the reader. Shortly after the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748 the whole of the small debt which Ireland had incurred had been liquidated, but the Seven Years' War and the War of the American Revolution had created a new debt, and for some years after the last peace there were annual deficits. In January 1786 the Accountant-General observed that since the year 1760 the Irish national debt had increased from 223,000*l.* to 2,181,501*l.*, but he added as a palliation, 'that two very expensive companions had gone hand in hand with that debt—premiums and parliamentary grants, which amounted in the said number of years to 2,700,000*l.*'[2] We have seen the strenuous efforts made by Grattan to put an end to the annual deficits; the resolution introduced at his desire into the commercial propositions for that purpose, and the additional duties that were imposed in 1785 and were estimated to produce 140,000*l.* a year. This measure proved perfectly efficacious in restoring the equilibrium, and until the great French War broke out, followed soon after by virulent disaffection and by a great rebellion in Ireland, Irish finances appear to have been thoroughly sound. Foster, who was by far the ablest finance minister Ireland has ever possessed,

[1] See the letters of Luzerne, Feb. 12, 16, March 28, 31, April 1, and the reply from the French Minister, April 6, 1789. French Foreign Office.

[2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* vi. 102. On the earlier history of the debt the reader may find some interesting facts in i. 39, 136–153.

observed in one of his speeches on the Union that in 1785, when the new taxes were imposed, the national debt was 2,381,501*l.* In 1793 at the end of the peace it was only 2,344,314*l.*[1]

This fact, however, alone is not decisive. We have seen how lamentable the poverty of Ireland had been in early periods when the debt was very small. A nation may have no debt because it is unable to borrow, or it may restore the equilibrium of its finances by taxation which is ruinous to its prosperity. Nothing, however, is more certain than that for many years after the imposition of the new taxation, Irish wealth was rapidly augmenting. At the end of the session of 1787 Foster, who was then Speaker, when presenting the money bills to the Lord-Lieutenant for the royal assent, said 'the wisdom of the principle which the Commons have established and persevered in under your grace's auspices, of preventing the further accumulation of national debt, is now powerfully felt throughout the kingdom in its many beneficial consequences. Public credit has gradually risen to a height unknown for many years. Agriculture has brought in new supplies of wealth, and the merchants and manufacturers are each encouraged to extend their efforts, by the security it has given them that no new taxes will obstruct the progress of their works or impede the success of their speculations.' He added, however, some remarkable words referring to the stringent Whiteboy legislation of that year, which characterise truly the spirit in which at that time Irish affairs were administered. 'Happy as our situation is, we know that all its blessings will be a vain expectation, if a spirit of outrage and opposition to the law shall prevent internal industry, and depreciate the national character. We have therefore applied ourselves to form such laws as must, under the firmness and the justice of your grace's Government, effectually and speedily suppress that lawless spirit.'[2]

I have quoted already, the letter of Rutland in March 1785, in which he complained that the result of nine or ten years of deficits had been that the Government 4 per cent. debentures, which had once been above par, had sunk to 88 per cent.[3] Imme-

[1] See his speech in February 1800.

[2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* vii. 373, 374. See also his speech at the end of the following session, viii. 419.

[3] Rutland to Sydney, March 4, 1785.

diately after the imposition of the new taxes, however, they rose, and in the beginning of 1787 Rutland was able to send over to Sydney a plan which he had accepted, for replacing 4 per cent. debentures of 200,000*l.* by debentures of 3½ per cent.; and Treasury bills for 100,000*l.* bearing an interest of 3*d.* per 100*l.* a day, by others bearing interest of 2½*d.*, 'a pleasing proof,' as he justly said, 'of the credit in which the funds of this country at present stand.'[1] A year later, under the administration of Buckingham, and in spite of a considerable addition to the military forces, a similar process of reduction was extended to the whole of the remaining debt. 'The Lord-Lieutenant,' wrote the Chief Secretary on this occasion, 'enjoys particular pleasure in reflecting that the state of public credit in Ireland is such that Government, while it attains an increase of effective force to Great Britain, can in the same instant bring forward a plan for the reduction of the interest upon the whole of the national debt.'[2]

These two reductions were not, it is true, carried out without a certain premium which was raised in the form of lotteries,[3] but the real price of the Government loans was stated by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to be 3*l.* 18*s.* per cent.;[4] and speaking in 1788, at a time when the financial prosperity of the Ministry of Pitt was at its height, he was able to declare that 'the public funds in this country have been higher here these several years past than what they are in England.'[5] We have seen that about this time Pitt was looking forward confidently to the rapid diminution and not very distant extinction of the English National Debt. In Ireland the prevailing spirit was not less sanguine, and the best financiers connected with the Government avowed their belief that the finances of Ireland were now so satisfactorily established, that Ireland was never again likely to increase her debt.[6]

The financial debates of this year are singularly instructive, both on account of the rare amount of knowledge and ability they displayed, and on account of the many incidental lights

[1] Feb. 13, 1787, Rutland to Sydney.
[2] Feb. 2, 1788, Fitzherbert to Nepean.
[3] 28 Geo. III. c. 2. See, too, a speech of Fitzgibbon, *Irish Parl. Deb.* viii. 313.
[4] Ibid. pp. 294, 295.
[5] Ibid. p. 238.
[6] Ibid. pp. 289, 290, 295, 321.

they throw on the condition of the country. In Ireland as in England, and indeed in all, or almost all, European countries except Holland, the rate of interest was settled by law, and the rate in Ireland was six per cent. while in England it was only five. The Irish rate of interest had been reduced in 1703 from ten to eight, in 1721 to seven, and in 1731 to six per cent., and it was now assimilated to the English rate. It was mentioned in the course of the debate that first-class mortgages on land could be had in England for four and a half per cent.; in Ireland for five per cent.

As early as 1768 the necessity for increased intercourse with England was recognised by the establishment of three additional packet boats between Holyhead and Dublin, thus securing six weekly mails between England and Ireland.[1] Travellers who visited Dublin towards 1780 remarked that a penny post had recently been established in the city; that new houses and public buildings were everywhere arising; that more than twenty stage coaches connected the metropolis with distant parts of Ireland.[2] 'The roads,' said one traveller, 'are almost invariably excellent. The inns are furnished with every accommodation that a traveller not too fastidious can require. . . . Travelling is perfectly secure. . . . Footpads, robberies, and highwaymen are seldom heard of except in the vicinity of Dublin.'[3] The splendour of the capital was indeed out of all proportion to the wealth of the country;[4] but it at the same time indicated clearly an increasing industrial activity. The old Custom House became so inadequate for the business which passed through it, that in 1781 the foundation was laid of a new Custom House of great architectural beauty, which was opened ten years later. In 1782, under the administration of Lord Carlisle, a National Bank with a capital of one million and a

[1] *Annual Register*, 1768, p. 85.

[2] Luckombe's *Tour in Ireland*, 1780; Twiss, *Tour in Ireland*, 1785.

[3] Twiss' *Tour*, pp. 117–119.

[4] Woodfall writes from Dublin in 1785: 'You who were here so lately would scarcely know this city, so much is it improved, so rapidly is it continuing to improve. After the talk of the misery of the people in our Parliament, and in the Parliament here, I cannot but feel daily astonishment at the nobleness of the new buildings and the spacious improvements hourly making in the streets. I am sometimes tempted to suspect appearances, and to think I am at table with a man who gives me Burgundy, but whose attendant is a bailiff disguised in livery. In a word there never was so splendid a metropolis for so poor a country.' *Auckland Correspondence*, i. 84, 85.

half was established in Dublin. A General Post Office, the Irish Academy, a College of Physicians, and a College of Surgeons speedily followed, and men of all parties and opinions recognised the rapid strides of national prosperity. Arthur Young, indeed, as early as 1778 maintained, in opposition to the best Irish opinion, that the country was even then in a progressive state, and had been steadily improving since the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748;[1] but after the concession of free trade the signs of advance were far more certain and unequivocal. In 1785 Lord Sheffield, in his well-known treatise on Irish trade, asserted that 'perhaps the improvement of Ireland is as rapid as any country ever experienced,' and that 'the kingdom in general is in the most prosperous state.'[2] In the debates on Orde's propositions Ireland was constantly, though no doubt very untruly, represented in England, as likely to become a most serious commercial rival.[3] In 1790 Sir John Parnell, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, stated in Parliament that 'it was his pride and his happiness to declare that he did not think it possible for any nation to have improved more in her circumstances since 1784 . . . than Ireland had done; from that time the debt of the nation had decreased 96,000*l.*, and the interest on the debt still remaining had decreased 17,000*l.* per annum, which was precisely the same thing at four per cent. as if the principal had been reduced 425,000*l.* more. Add to this the great increase of trade, our exports alone having increased 800,000*l.* last year beyond the former period; and he believed it would be difficult in the history of the world to show a nation rising faster in prosperity.'[4]

In 1793 Crumpe published that remarkable 'Essay on the best Means of providing Employment for the People,' which is one of the most faithful, and at the same time most unflattering, pictures of the social and industrial condition of Ireland. But while tracing with an unsparing hand the great industrial failings of the people, he adds that 'the defects which have been noticed are daily diminishing. The middling ranks are becom-

[1] *Tour in Ireland*, ii. 332, 333.

[2] *Observations on the Trade of Ireland*, pp. 6, 352.

[3] There are some striking essays on the condition of Ireland as it appeared at this time to intelligent Englishmen, in an English periodical, published in 1785, called *The Political Herald and Review*.

[4] *Irish Parl. Deb.* x. 155.

ing more attentive to their debts and less indulgent to their extravagance. A spirit of industry is infusing its regenerating vigour among them; the vain and ridiculous aversion to the pursuits of commerce or other industrious occupations is wearing out, and the encouragement of agriculture more generally attended to. The lower classes are becoming more industrious, more wealthy, more independent. . . . The situation of the peasant has since the final pacification of the kingdom, but more especially since the settlement of its Constitution in 1782, been daily improving.'[1] 'I am bold to say,' said Lord Clare, speaking of the preceding twenty years, in the remarkable speech which he delivered and published in 1798, 'there is not a nation on the habitable globe which has advanced in cultivation and commerce, in agriculture and in manufactures, with the same rapidity in the same period.'[2] Cooke, who was the chief official writer in favour of the Union, uses very similar language. 'What is meant,' he asked in a pamphlet which had great influence, 'by a firm and steady administration? Does it mean such an administration as tends to the increase of the nation in population; its advancement in agriculture, in manufactures, in wealth, and prosperity? If that is intended, we have had the experience of it these twenty years; for it is universally admitted that no country in the world has made such rapid advances as Ireland has done in these respects.'[3]

Many similar passages might be adduced, but these will probably be deemed sufficient. Of the causes of this prosperity, two at least of the most important are sufficiently obvious, while

[1] Crumpe's *Essay*, 189, 201. Compare a remarkable passage in Lord Clare's *Speech*, Feb. 19, 1798, describing the condition of the southern and midland parts of the kingdom at the time when Ulster was convulsed by the reform agitation. 'During all the disturbances which prevailed in other parts of the kingdom we were in a state of profound tranquillity and contentment there; the farmers had already tasted the sweets of sober industry; agriculture was increasing most rapidly, and the country wore the face of wealth and comfort and happiness; nay, more, the condition of the lowest order of the peasantry was ameliorated in a degree that I never flattered myself I should have lived to witness.' (P. 69.) See, too, on the growing prosperity, a pamphlet by one of the best English authorities on the condition of the poor—the Rev. J. Howlett, *On Population in Ireland* (1787).

[2] Lord Clare's *Speech*, p. 5.

[3] *Arguments for and against the Union Considered* (1798), pp. 28, 29. See, too, a very striking description of the progress of Ireland in the last years of the century, in a speech delivered by Grattan in 1810. *Speeches*, iv. 205–207.

others may give rise to considerable dispute. The abolition of the trade restrictions, by which Irish prosperity had been so long cramped and stunted, was at once followed by a great increase in nearly every branch of commerce, and especially in the Irish trade with the West Indies,[1] while the abolition of the more oppressive portions of the penal code brought back much capital which had been invested on the Continent, and caused Irish wealth, industry, and energy to flow freely in Irish channels. A few years of external and internal peace, light taxes, and good national credit followed, and enabled the country to profit largely by these new advantages. In the opinion, however, of the best Irish writers and politicians of the eighteenth century, very much was also due to the great impulse which was given to agriculture by the corn bounties of 1784, and to the large parliamentary grants for carrying out public works and for instituting and encouraging different forms of manufacture. Of the corn bounties and the extreme importance that was attached to them I have already spoken. Whatever may be thought of them, there is at least, I think, no question that the great corn trade which had arisen in the last sixteen years of the century was an important element of Irish wealth; and it was mentioned in Parliament that about three years after the bounties on exportation had been granted, the exports of corn already attained the annual value of 400,000*l.*[2]

Large grants were also made for fisheries, canals, harbours, and other public works, and a system of bounties for encouraging particular manufactures was extensively pursued. This system is exceedingly alien to modern English notions; but in judging it, we must remember that it prevailed—though on a proportionately smaller scale—in England and in most other countries; that in Ireland it was originally a partial counterpoise or

[1] See some remarkable statistics collected in Grattan's *Life*, iii. 275. The import of sugar from the West Indies in 1781 was only 7,000 cwt. In 1784 it rose to 33,000 cwt. In the debate on the reduction of interest in 1788 the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that in 1703 the tonnage of shipping employed by Ireland was only 70,000 tons. At the time he spoke, it was more than 500,000 tons. In 1703 the exports of Ireland were 572,000. In 1788 they exceeded three millions. *Irish Parl. Deb.* viii. 278. If the reader desires to carry the comparison on, to a later date, he will find striking materials in Foster's speech on the Union delivered in April 1799, which is published separately (see especially pp. 104–109), and in Lord Clare's published speech in 1798.

[2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* viii. 319.

compensation for many unjust and artificial restrictions imposed on the different branches of native industry, and also that it was pursued in a country where the elements of spontaneous energy were incomparably weaker than in England. In my own opinion, English economical writers have usually generalised much too exclusively from the conditions of English life, and have greatly underrated the part which Government must play in industrial enterprises in countries where industry is still in its infancy; where capital has not been accumulated, and where industrial habits have not been formed. 'The infancy of our manufactures and the poverty of our people,' said Flood in one of his speeches in 1785, 'has forced us into a variety of bounties and encouragements, in order to give some spring to the languor of the nation. The Linen Board, the Dublin Society, parliamentary donations, directly or indirectly are made use of for this purpose. Our linen, woollen, silk, cotton, glass manufactures; in a word, almost everything respecting manufactures or husbandry receives some encouragement.' The writer whom I have already referred to as giving the fullest account of the economical condition of Ireland at this period, observes that 'the bounties on manufactures from the year 1783 to 1789 inclusive amounted to 115,000*l.* The sums granted in aid of manufactures, charities, and public works in four years ended in 1788, amounted to 290,057*l.* besides the annual grants to the trustees of the linen manufactures which were greater than before, and to the Dublin Society, &c.;' and he expresses his own opinion that these bounties, but more especially the bounty on the exportation of corn, had 'operated powerfully in rescuing Ireland from the state of poverty into which she had fallen.' He acknowledges that there was often much waste, jobbing, and dishonesty in the way in which they were applied; but adds that, while the public grants had considerably increased, such misapplications had in the latter days of the Irish Parliament undoubtedly diminished.[1]

The corn trade and the linen trade stood at the head of Irish industries, and while the first had almost entirely arisen within the period we are examining, the latter had rapidly increased. In 1788 Foster observed that in the six preceding years the

[1] Newenham, *View of Ireland*, pp. 205–207.

annual export of linen had risen from twenty to thirty millions of yards.[1] A number of other manufactures and industries were at the same time growing up. The silk manufacture underwent violent fluctuations, but it was stated in the Irish Parliament in 1784 that there were at that time no less than 1,400 silk looms at work in Dublin, employing 11,000 persons.[2] In a speech in 1785, Foster, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, stated in the Irish Parliament that formerly Ireland was accustomed annually to import new drapery to the amount of upwards of 300,000 yards, but that the importation had almost ceased, and the native manufacture had so developed that the exports of Irish drapery exceeded 650,000 yards a year.[3] The cotton manufacture was only introduced into Ireland after 1780, but in 1785 it was computed that it already employed nearly 30,000 people. In 1783, 4,000*l.* was granted by the Parliament for cotton machinery, and in the following year the Vice-Treasurer was directed to issue bills to the amount of 25,000*l.* to Captain Brooke for carrying that manufacture into the county of Kildare. His great manufacture at Prosperous in that county ultimately failed, but several other cotton manufactures were scattered over Ireland, and Irish printed cotton obtained a considerable reputation and is said to have been largely smuggled into England.[4] The glass manufacture, which had been crushed by the iniquitous English law of George II. forbidding the Irish to export their glass to any country whatever, revived with reviving liberty. Lord Sheffield noticed in 1785 that nine glass houses had suddenly arisen, and that large quantities of Irish glass were already exported to America. It was boasted that the glass made at Waterford fully equalled the best article of English manufacture.[5] A hat and a carpet manufacture existed on a small but an increasing scale; Irish gloves and tabbinets were widely sought for, even on the Continent,[6] and from 1790 to 1792 the wealth of the country was very materially increased

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* viii. 319.

[2] Ibid. iii. p. 156; Sheffield *On the Trade of Ireland*, pp. 193–196; Newenham, *View of Ireland*, pp. 119, 120.

[3] Ibid. iv. 56, 57.

[4] Newenham, pp. 205, 208; Sheffield, pp. 196–208; Mullalla's *View of Irish Affairs*, ii. 131, 132.

[5] Sheffield, pp. 237–240; Newenham, p. 105.

[6] Newenham, p. 208. See also a very interesting and detailed review of the different industries in Ireland, in a speech by Ogilvie on the commercial treaty with France. *Irish Parl. Deb.* vii. 272–282.

by the foundation or great extension of breweries of ale and porter. Cork was the chief centre, and they were warmly encouraged by the Irish Parliament not only on economical, but also on moral grounds, as counteracting that excessive use of spirituous liquors which was the great bane of Ireland. Newenham mentions the curious fact that at the close of the eighteenth century, in the province of Munster, the use of malt liquors greatly exceeded that of spirits.[1]

This picture of the condition of Ireland in the earlier years of its independent Parliament differs, I know, widely from an impression which is very general in England; but the more important facts on which I have formed my judgment have been fully stated, and those who desire to examine the subject in detail can easily follow the indications I have given. The true history of the Irish Parliament is not to be found in the fantastic pages of Barrington, and still less in the dishonest pictures of modern partisans. It is to be found in the excellent reports of its debates; in the Irish Statute-book, which contains the nett results of its work; in the volumes of those contemporary writers who have most fully examined the industrial and economical conditions of Ireland under its rule. The character of this body I have tried to draw with a steady and an impartial hand, both in its lights and in its shades, and I am conscious that the task is both a difficult and a thankless one, at a time when the whole subject is generally looked upon under the distorting influences of modern politics. To an historian of the eighteenth century, however, few things can be more grotesquely absurd than to suppose that the merits or demerits, the failure or the success, of the old Irish Parliament has any real bearing on modern schemes for reconstructing the government of Ireland on a revolutionary and Jacobin basis; entrusting the protection of property and the maintenance of law to some democratic assembly consisting mainly of Fenians and Land-leaguers, of paid agitators and of penniless adventurers. The parliamentary system of the eighteenth century might be represented in very different lights by its enemies and by its friends. Its enemies

[1] Newenham, pp. 224, 225. Many particulars about Irish breweries and spirit-drinking, will be found in the debates of 1791. *Irish Parl. Deb.* vol. xi.

would describe it as essentially government carried on through the instrumentality of a corrupt oligarchy, of a large, compact body of members holding places and pensions at the pleasure of the Government, and removed by the system of rotten boroughs from all effectual popular control. Its friends would describe it as essentially the government of Ireland by the gentlemen of Ireland, and especially by its landlord class. Neither representation would be altogether true, but each contains a large measure of truth. The nature of the Irish constituencies and the presence in the House of Commons of a body of pensioners and placemen forming considerably more than a third of the whole assembly, and nearly half of its active members, gave the Government a power which, except under very rare and extraordinary circumstances, must, if fully exerted, have been overwhelming. The system of corruption was largely extended after the Regency controversy, and it produced evils that it is difficult to overrate. It enabled a small oligarchy to resist the most earnest and most legitimate demands of Irish opinion, and as Grattan vainly predicted it taught the people to look elsewhere for their representatives, and exposed them to the fatal contagion of the revolutionary spirit that was then circulating through Europe. On the other hand, the Irish Parliament was a body consisting very largely of independent country gentlemen, who on nearly all questions affecting the economical and industrial development of the country, had a powerful if not a decisive influence. The lines of party were but faintly drawn. Most questions were settled by mutual compromise or general concurrence, and it was in reality only in a small class of political questions that the corrupt power of Government seems to have been strained. The Irish House of Commons consisted mainly of the class of men who now form the Irish grand juries. It comprised the flower of the landlord class. It was essentially and pre-eminently the representative of the property of the country. It had all the instincts and the prejudices, but also all the qualities and the capacities, of an educated propertied class, and it brought great local knowledge and experience to its task. Most of its work was of that practical and unobtrusive character which leaves no trace in history. Several useful laws were made to rectify the scandalous abuses of Irish prisons; to improve the condition of

insolvent debtors; to prevent burials in churches; to establish hospitals and infirmaries; to check different kinds of disorder as they arose; to make harbours and canals; to encourage local institutions and industries; and except during the conflict on the Regency question, the parliamentary machine had hitherto moved on with very little friction or disturbance.

Of the large amount of ability which it comprised there can be no reasonable question, and this ability was by no means confined to the independent section. Several very able men accepted the general system of government, as, on the whole, the best suited for the circumstances of the country. Ireland has seldom or never produced, in the province of politics, men of wider knowledge and more solid ability than John Foster and Hely Hutchinson, while Fitzgibbon, Langrishe, and Parnell were all men of much more than ordinary talents. All of these were during the greater part of their lives connected with the Government.

The system of government indeed, though corrupt, anomalous, and exposed to many dangers, was not one of those which are incompatible with a large measure of national prosperity. There were unfair monopolies of patronage; there was a pension list of rather more than 100,000*l.* a year, a great part of which was grossly corrupt; there was a scandalous multiplication and a scandalous employment of sinecures; but these are not the kind of evils that seriously affect the material well-being of the great mass of the community. In spite of much corrupt expenditure the Government was a cheap one;[1] Ireland was among the most lightly taxed nations in Europe, and with the exception of the tithe system, which was unjust in the exemption of pasture, and which in some parts of the country fell with a most oppressive weight upon the poor, there was little to complain of in the apportionment of public burdens. In France, and over the greater part of the continent of Europe, the poor were at this time crushed by special and iniquitous taxation, from which the rich were exempt, and by an immense mass of feudal burdens and restrictions. There was nothing of this kind in later Irish legisla-

[1] George Ponsonby once said, 'The expense of the monarchical part of our Constitution is less in Ireland than in any country in Europe. In England the civil list is one million annually; in Ireland the expense of the monarchical part of the Constitution is about forty thousand pounds.' *Irish Parl. Deb.* vi. 287.

tion. The only direct tax which was paid by the poor was hearth money, at the rate of two shillings a hearth, and a few years before the Union, cabins with only one hearth were exempted.[1] There was, it is true, no legal provision, as in England, for the poor, but the evils of the English poor law were so great that this was rather an advantage than the reverse, and the Irish Parliament was accustomed to make large grants for the support of charitable institutions, and, in times of distress, even for the direct relief of the sufferers. All those portions of the penal code against Catholics which oppressed the poor in their religion or their industry had either been repealed or had become completely obsolete.

The real obstacles to material prosperity were now much more moral than political. They were to be found in vices of thought and character which, if the present book be truly written, are largely explicable by the past conditions of the nation, which had deepened and intensified through many disastrous centuries, but which seemed now at last to be slowly and partially diminishing. Recklessness, improvidence, a contempt for labour and economy, a low standard of public duty among the higher orders; idleness, turbulence, ignorance, drunkenness, and an extreme proneness to crimes of violence and combination among the poor; a want in all classes of seriousness, self-reliance, enterprise, and respect for law, were the real obstacles to Irish prosperity. Though a few branches of trade were still closed, the legislation of 1779 and of 1782, and the free admission which England had granted to Irish linen, furnished a field of enterprise which was more than adequate to the resources and industry of Ireland. Her position was essentially different from that of Scotland at the time when Scotland purchased the commercial freedom which was indispensable to her well-being, at the price of a legislative union, and in this difference we may find a clue to a great part of the difference in the subsequent history of the two nations.

Nor was it merely in material prosperity that the signs of improvement were visible. Intellectual activity in the last forty years of the eighteenth century perceptibly increased, and it was assuming more and more a national cast. The writings of Charles O'Connor, Ledwich, Vallancey, and Mervyn Archdall

[1] This was a favourite object of Doyle, Conolly, and Grattan. See *Irish Parl. Deb.* vii. 222, viii. 397–406.

invested the earlier period of Irish history with a new interest, and the Irish Academy, which was incorporated in the beginning of 1786 under the presidency of Lord Charlemont, gave a great impulse to serious and unsectarian scholarship. I have already noticed the important contributions which were made to a better knowledge of the rebellion of 1641; and the 'History of Ireland' by Leland, one of the Fellows of Trinity College, which was published in 1773, though monotonous and colourless in style, and often superficial in research, acquired and still maintains the position of a standard work. Another Irish history, written in the form of letters and dedicated to Lord Charlemont, was published in 1783 by William Crawford, one of the chaplains of the volunteers. It has little historical value except where it relates contemporary events in Ulster, but like the later history of Gordon, it has a great interest to the student of Irish opinion, as showing with what a complete absence of religious prejudice and animosity, it was possible for an Irish clergyman, at the close of the eighteenth century, to describe the periods of Irish history in which religious passions had been most furiously aroused.

The decadence of sectarian bigotry was, indeed, one of the happiest features of the time. Ireland, like all other countries, experienced the intellectual influences which were everywhere lowering the theological temperature, and diminishing the prominence of dogma in religious teaching; and the new national interests which had arisen had done much to turn the thoughts and passions of men into secular channels. By far the most brilliant and popular writer on the Catholic side was Arthur O'Leary, but though his devotion to his creed was incontestable, it would be hardly possible to find a writer of his profession who exhibits its distinctive doctrines in a more subdued and attenuated form, and no one appears to have found anything strange or equivocal in the curiously characteristic sentence in which Grattan described his merits. 'If I did not know him to be a Christian clergyman, I should suppose him by his writings to be a philosopher of the Augustan age.' The case of Dean Kirwan is even more striking. This very remarkable man, whose powers of pulpit oratory seem to have been not inferior to those of Whitefield, and whose eloquence was

coupled by Barrington with that of Curran and Sheridan, was a member of an old Catholic family in Galway. He was educated by the Jesuits at St. Omer, where he was accustomed to say 'he had imbibed the noble ambition of benefiting mankind.' He took priest's orders, became professor of natural and moral philosophy in the University of Louvain, and afterwards chaplain to the Neapolitan ambassador in London; but in 1787 he conformed to the Established Church in Dublin, and became by far the greatest of Irish preachers.

In the present century it is almost certain that a man who had passed through such a change would have made the differences between his former and his latter creed one of the chief subjects of his preaching; but Kirwan through his whole career resolutely refused to touch upon any points of controversy. He mainly justified his adhesion to the Established Church on the ground that it gave him a larger sphere for that practical usefulness which he conceived to be the highest aim of a Christian minister, and he made it his special mission to allay religious animosity, to preach the tenets of a pure and perfectly unsectarian morality, and especially to plead the cause of the suffering and of the poor.[1] Extempore preaching at the time when he appeared was very rare in the Irish Church,[2] and the power which the passionate eloquence of Kirwan exercised over vast congregations is all the more wonderful because he never adopted any of those startling tenets which formed the staple of the Methodist preaching. The collections for the poor in his church arose at once to four or five times their usual amount. On one occasion

[1] In a letter which he wrote just after his change, the following characteristic passage occurs: 'On Sunday next I am to preach at St. Peter's, and for the first time in a Protestant place of worship. But though I have changed the sphere of my exertions, they shall still, under God, be invariably directed to the same object—to improve the human heart; to enlarge and enlighten the understanding of men; banish religious prejudices, and diffuse through society the great blessings of peace, order, and mutual affection. . . . If I have passed to the Church Establishment, I have only passed into a situation in which I can better accomplish a desire which has ever been the next and dearest to my heart—that of rendering more service to the community, and inculcating the pure morality of the Gospel with greater fruit and extent. Upon the clearest reflection, I envisage Christianity in a great measure as a practical institution of religion, designed by Christ to regulate the dispositions and improve the character of men.' See the Life of Kirwan in the *Remains of Samuel O'Sullivan*, ii. 196, 197.

[2] Two preachers named Lefanu and Harrison had begun this custom as early as 1780. *Anthologia Hibernica*, ii. 123.

1,500*l.* was collected for the Meath Hospital. Watches, jewels, and bracelets were often flung in fits of uncontrollable enthusiasm into the plate. It was found necessary to protect the entrance of the churches where he preached from the overwhelming throng, by guards and palisades, and the governors of all the day schools in Dublin agreed in a resolution expressive of the great national advantages that had arisen from the charity which he evoked, and calling on the vestries 'to consider the most effectual method to secure to this city an instrument under Providence of so much public benefit.'

His character seems to have been at once singularly pure, disinterested, and benevolent, and his warm friendship with Grattan and his firm attachment to Whig principles for a long time shut him out from the favours of the Government. Four hundred pounds a year was the highest ecclesiastical income he possessed till 1800, when Lord Cornwallis bestowed on him the small Deanery of Killala, though he had been recognised for thirteen years as incomparably the foremost man in the Irish Church. It was not for such men or for such services that the overgrown prizes of that Church were reserved, and Lord Westmorland in offering him a small living of about 200*l.* a year wrote very frankly: 'It is far, far below your merits; but Government must reserve its high rewards for the services of its friends.' Grattan in 1792 paid a noble tribute in Parliament to the great preacher. 'This man,' he said, 'preferred our country and our religion, and brought to both genius superior to what he found in either. He called forth the latent virtue of the human heart and taught men to discover in themselves a mine of charity of which the proprietors had been unconscious. In feeding the lamp of charity he has almost exhausted the lamp of life. He came to interrupt the repose of the pulpit, and shakes one world with the thunder of the other. The preacher's desk becomes the throne of light. Around him a train, not such as crouch and swagger at the levée of princes, not such as attend the procession of the Viceroy, horse, foot, and dragoons, but that wherewith a great genius peoples his own state—charity in ecstasy and vice in humiliation—vanity, arrogance, and saucy empty pride appalled by the rebuke of the preacher, and cheated for a moment of their native improbity and insolence. What reward?

St. Nicholas within or St. Nicholas without. The curse of Swift is upon him, to have been born an Irishman and a man of genius and to have used it for the good of his country.'[1]

A career like that of Kirwan would have been scarcely possible in Ireland in the theological atmosphere of the succeeding generation, and the liberality both of O'Leary and of Kirwan has appeared to their clerical biographers to be a matter requiring not a little apology. It is related of Law, who was appointed Bishop of Killala in 1787, that finding the population of his diocese almost exclusively Catholic, he distributed among them some of the best works of their own divines, declaring that as he could not make them good Protestants he would at least try to make them good Roman Catholics.[2] The undoubted fact that the most active advocates for giving votes to Catholics were found at Belfast, and belonged to those dissenting bodies which were theologically most opposed to Catholicism, is a clear proof that politics had begun to dominate over theology. The volunteers in the latter part of their career, without hesitation or concealment, enrolled Catholics in their ranks,[3] and the party which desired to concede to them political power continued to increase. 'The right of being elected,' wrote Lord Sheffield in 1785, 'would surely follow their being eligible, but at all events the power would be in the electors. It is curious to observe one-fifth or perhaps one-sixth of a nation in possession of the power and property of the country, eager to communicate that power

[1] See the sketch of the Life of Kirwan prefixed to his sermons; the admirable biography of him in the *Remains of the Rev. S. O'Sullivan*; Barrington's *Personal Sketches; Archæologia Hibernica*, i. 414–417. Croker fully corroborates the accounts of Kirwan's marvellous power, and he places him as an orator in the same rank with Pitt, Canning, and Curran. *Croker Papers*, iii. 216, 217.

[2] Mant's *History of the Church of Ireland*, ii. 685.

[3] 'The Papist with an Orange cockade fires in honour of King William's birthday. He goes to a Protestant church and hears a charity sermon. . . . To permit the use of arms to all Catholics would have been madness. To confine it to men of a certain property was a project full of difficulty and of offence. . . . We wished for some mode of judging, which applied not to property only, but to fitness and to character, by which a worthy Roman Catholic might, and such a one only, be trusted with the use of arms and attached to his Protestant fellow-subjects. Volunteering has done what law could not do. The Catholic who wishes to carry arms proposes himself to a Protestant corps. His character is tried by his neighbours. He is admitted to an honour and a privilege; he receives a reward for his good conduct. . . . Thus are the best of the Catholic body happily selected, the whole of the Catholic body satisfied, and the two religions marvellously united.' *Thoughts on the Volunteers* (1784), pp. 20, 21.

to the remaining four-fifths, which would in effect entirely transfer it from themselves.'[1]

It would, however, be easy to exaggerate the extent of the change. The elements of turbulence in the country were very numerous, and little provocation was needed to fan them into a flame. The contests between the Peep o' Day Boys and the Defenders in Ulster are said to have originated in a private quarrel unconnected with religion, but they speedily assumed the character of a religious war. The former, who were exclusively Protestants and mainly Presbyterians, professed a determination to enforce the law disarming Papists, and they were accustomed to enter their cottages in early morning to search for and to seize arms. The Defenders were exclusively Catholics, and were professedly, as their name imports, a purely defensive body. In truth, however, both sides were animated by a furious hatred, and both sides committed many acts of violence and aggression. The disturbances appear to have begun in 1785, but they continued for several years, and the Peep-o'-Days ultimately merged into Orangemen, and the Defenders into United Irishmen. Bodies of several hundreds of men of the lowest class on more than one occasion came into collision: several lives were lost; a reign of terror prevailed in large districts of Ulster, and it led to a new enrolment of Protestant volunteers to maintain the peace.[2] In Munster the Whiteboy outrages were certainly not of a religious origin, but they were directed mainly, though not exclusively, against the payment of tithes, and they appear to have been not unfrequently organised in Catholic chapels.

As the party strengthened which demanded Catholic emancipation, the rival interests and animosities were called more pro-

[1] Sheffield's *Observations on the Trade of Ireland*, p. 365.

[2] Plowden's *Historical Register*, ii. 200–202. Several letters on the subject, representing the blame as attaching chiefly to the Catholics, will be found in the *Charlemont Correspondence* (*MSS.*). Among them is a very honourable one from Fitzgibbon asking advice from Lord Charlemont about a report from Armagh that 500 Catholics were in arms, and that soldiers must be sent down. 'Of all expedients,' the Chancellor said, 'that of military force is the last that ought to be resorted to.' (Fitzgibbon to Charlemont, July 16, 1789.) In the Irish State Paper Office there is a curious letter from Newry (July 17, 1789), giving a detailed and very graphic picture of the terrorism which 'a mob of Presbyterians under the name of "Break-of-day-Boys" were exercising over the poorer Catholics of that district.'

minently into the conflict, but the motives in action were usually much more political than theological. The effects of a great transfer of political influence; the insecurity it would give to property which rested largely on the Act of Settlement; the danger of calling into power masses of utterly ignorant men, were the topics chiefly dilated upon. National education had not yet been undertaken by the Parliaments either of England or Ireland as a serious duty, and the Charter Schools, which were still liberally supported, scarcely cast a perceptible ray of light on the dense mass of Catholic ignorance. In Trinity College, it is true, Catholics of the higher and middle orders were already admitted by connivance, though they could not yet obtain degrees or honours,[1] but there was no provision for the poor. The endowments of the great schools could be of no use to them. The parochial schools which in England did something for popular education, were the products of a wealthy establishment, and no such schools existed or could exist among the Irish Catholics. For generations their education had been proscribed by law, and when the laws were repealed, the poverty of priests and people, the absence of educational institutions and endowments, and the habits contracted during the penal laws were insuperable obstacles. The great mass of the Irish Catholics were either absolutely illiterate, or were left to the slight, uncertain, and often perverting teaching of the hedge schoolmaster.[2]

In 1787, indeed, an extremely comprehensive system of national education was introduced, in the form of resolutions, into the Irish Parliament by Orde, the Chief Secretary of the Duke of Rutland. He proposed to revive the schools in every parish which had been enjoined by a long obsolete statute of Henry VIII.; to establish four large schools of a higher kind, imitated from the Bluecoat School in Dublin and Christ's Hospital in London, and two others especially charged with preparing boys for the University; to reform the diocesan schools, and ultimately to found a second University, and to levy from different sources considerable sums in support of these institutions.[3] With the

[1] See vol. iv. 530, 531. Also the statement of Wolfe Tone in his *Life and Works* (American edition), i. 355.

[2] The strongest statement I know of the extent to which Catholic schools multiplied in the last years of the century will be found in Newenham, *State of Ireland*, pp. 13, 19.

[3] *Irish Parl. Deb.* vii. 511. In a

exception of the resolution relating to the establishment of a new University, which was opposed by a single member, the resolutions introduced by Orde passed unanimously through the House of Commons.[1] But no step was taken for carrying them into effect. The death of the Duke of Rutland, in October 1787, led to the recall of Orde, and his project, which was certainly not among the least memorable incidents in Irish parliamentary history, has been scarcely noticed by Irish historians.

Legislation on such subjects occupies but a small place in the Statute-book either of England or Ireland during the eighteenth century. On the other hand, many forms of private industry were encouraged, and some real efforts were made to spread industry and order over those portions of the island which were still in a condition of almost absolute anarchy. In these tasks the Irish Parliament, with all its shortcomings, does not appear to me to have seriously failed. Nor was it from the presence and proceedings of this body that serious danger to the Empire was to be feared. It was rather from the formation beyond its walls of a great force of opinion and of agitation which it could neither represent nor control. The country was awakening to a keen consciousness of its political existence; and

remarkable pamphlet, called *The Choice of Evils, or, Which is best for the Kingdom of Ireland; the Commercial Propositions or a Legislative Union*, published in Dublin in 1787, there is a powerful appeal in favour of the establishment of a second college attached to the University of Dublin, and admitting members of all religious denominations; and also for the admission of Catholics to degrees in Trinity College. The writer says: 'How necessary it is that something effectual should be done is manifest from the efforts which both the North and South are at present making for the education of youth. Witness the Academies of Belfast, Strabane, and Carlow. These are pushed forward by private undertakers as the spontaneous vegetation of the soil. . . . Consistency requires that the Roman Catholics should not be denied seminaries for their education. We have so far relaxed the penal laws as to suffer them to acquire a permanence in their property. It would be absurd to refuse them the power of improving their minds as well as their fortunes.' 'We have not done enough so long as the clause in one of the Acts of 1782, disallowing the erection or endowment of any popish university or college, remains unrepealed. . . . It would, however, be the greatest solecism that ever was thought of in politics, to give them [Catholics] either votes in Parliament or liberty to carry arms.'

[1] The very interesting debates on this subject will be found in vol. vii. of the *Irish Parl. Deb.* The Presbyterians at this time petitioned for the endowment of a Presbyterian college; but Hely Hutchinson, who took a leading part in these discussions, expressed a decided opinion against separate places of education for different religious persuasions, and urged the great importance of admitting members of all creeds to the full privileges of the University. He mentioned that many Dissenters were at Trinity College. Hutchinson was still Provost of Trinity College as well as Secretary of State.

it was inevitable, if the peace of Ireland was to be maintained, that something should be done to make the Irish Parliament a really representative body, and to put an end to the system of monopoly and corruption which ran through every pore of the Irish Administration. Sooner or later this problem must have been inevitably faced; and the sudden impulse which the French Revolution had given to the democratic spirit in Europe forced it on, at a time when the system of corruption was at its height, and when the Irish Administration was in the hands of bitter enemies of reform. On the capital question of granting the suffrage to the Catholics, the Ministers in England, as we shall hereafter see, were in favour of concession, while the Administration in Ireland was bitterly opposed to it; and the result was a vacillation and division of policy in a critical and dangerous period, which led to consequences most fatal to the prosperity of Ireland.

The problem before the Irish Parliament would, under the most favourable circumstances, have been an extremely difficult one, and most analogies drawn from purely English experience, and especially from later English experience, only tend to mislead. The goodness of laws and political institutions is essentially relative, depending upon their adaptation to the character, circumstances, wants and traditions of the people for whom they are intended; and in all these respects, England and Ireland were wholly different. There is no greater delusion than to suppose that the same degree of popular government can be wisely accorded to nations in all stages of development, and that a country in a backward stage is really benefited by a servile imitation of the institutions of its more advanced neighbours. A country where the traditions of many peaceful centuries have knitted the various elements of national being into a happy unity, where there is no disaffection to the Crown or the Government, where the relations of classes are normal and healthy, where the influence of property is unbroken, and where those who are incapable of judging for themselves find natural leaders of character and intelligence everywhere at their head, can easily bear an amount of democracy which must bring utter ruin upon a country torn by sedition, religious animosities, and agrarian war, and in which all the natural ligatures of

society have been weakened or disjointed. An amount of democracy which in one country leaves the main direction of affairs in the hands of property and intelligence, in another country virtually disfranchises both, and establishes a system of legalised plunder by transferring all controlling authority to an ignorant and excitable peasantry, guided and duped by demagogues, place-hunters, and knaves. A system of criminal law and of criminal procedure which is admirably adapted for a country where crime is nothing more than the outbreak of isolated bad passions, and where every man's hand is against the criminal, must fail to fulfil the first purposes of justice, if it is applied without modification to a country where large classes of crime are looked upon by great masses of the population as acts of war, where jurymen will acquit in the face of the clearest evidence, and where known criminals may live in security under the shelter of popular connivance or popular intimidation. In a rich country, in which many generations of uninterrupted prosperity have raised the industrial spirit to the highest point, in which energy and self-reliance are almost redundantly displayed, and in which the middle class is the strongest power in the State, nearly all industrial enterprises may be safely left to the unassisted action of private individuals. It is not so in a very poor country, where the middle class is small and feeble, and where a long train of depressing circumstances have reduced the industrial spirit to the lowest ebb. Perhaps, the worst consequence of the legislative union has been the tendency it produces to measure Irish legislation by English wants and experience, and to force Ireland into a plane of democracy for which all who have any real knowledge of its circumstances must know that it is wholly unfitted. Very different conditions require very different types of administration, and, in Ireland, the elements of self-government lie, and always have lain, within a higher plane and a more restricted circle than in England, and the relations of classes and the conditions of opinion are incomparably less favourable to popular institutions. A stronger and firmer executive, a more restricted suffrage, a greater concentration of power, a more constant intervention of Government both in the way of assistance and initiative, and in the way of restriction and control, is imperatively required.

These essential conditions of Irish politics do not appear to me to have been unrecognised by the statesmen of the Irish Parliament, but they had two great and difficult tasks to fulfil, and the permanence of the Irish Constitution depended mainly upon the question whether in the next few years these tasks could be successfully accomplished. It was necessary to withdraw the direction of affairs from a corrupt but intelligent aristocracy without throwing it into the hands of demagogues and rebels, and it was no less necessary to take some serious step to put an end to the vicious system of religious ascendency without destroying the healthy and indispensable ascendency of property and intelligence.

CHAPTER XXV.

IRELAND, 1790–1793.

It was hoped by the English Government that with the recall of the Marquis of Buckingham most of the unpopularity which attached to the system he had pursued would disappear, and the Earl of Westmorland came over with the object of carrying out that system without change. Contrary to the usual custom, Major Hobart, who had been Chief Secretary during the last six months of the Viceroyalty of Buckingham, continued to hold the same office under his successor, and there was no important change in the Administration. Parliament was summoned on January 21, 1790, and a short but very stormy session ensued. An Opposition, numbering about ninety members and led with great ability by Grattan and by George Ponsonby, vehemently arraigned the proceedings of the present Ministers under the late Viceroyalty. They complained of the great recent increase in the Pension List, in the number of places and salaries held by members of Parliament, and in the expense of collecting the revenue. They introduced without success a Place Bill, a Pension Bill, a Responsibility Bill, a Bill for disfranchising revenue officers modelled after the English legislation, and they raised a new and very serious question by accusing the late ministers of a systematic sale of peerages. Grattan, in the most explicit terms, charged them with having 'not in one or two, but in many instances' made corrupt agreements to recommend politicians for peerages, for money, which was to be employed in the purchase of seats in the House of Commons. Such an act, Grattan truly said, was an impeachable offence, and both he and Ponsonby pledged themselves in the most positive manner to adduce evidence before a committee which would lead to conviction. The House of Commons, however, at the invitation of

the Government refused by 144 votes to 88 to grant a committee of inquiry, and Hobart refused to give any answer when challenged by Grattan, if the charge was unfounded, to declare on his honour that he did not believe such corrupt agreements to have taken place. Defeated in these efforts, the Opposition, shortly before the close of the session, placed some of the chief facts of their case on the journals of the House, in the form of an address to the King. It stated, among other things, that although civil pensions amounting to 14,000*l.* a year had lapsed since the Lady Day of 1784, yet the Pension List was now 16,000*l.* a year higher than at that date; that in the same space of time the expense of collecting the revenue had risen by 105,000*l.*; that no less than forty places or salaries held by members of Parliament had been created or revived within the last twenty years; that, exclusive of pensions, fourteen places and salaries had been created or revived, and distributed among members of Parliament during the last Viceroyalty in a single year, and that out of the 300 members who composed the Irish House of Commons, there were now 108 who were in receipt of salaries or pensions from the Crown.[1]

Though the Opposition failed in shaking the majority of the Government, their speeches had much influence in the country, and as signs of discontent were rapidly approaching, Government thought it wise to hasten the election, and the Parliament was dissolved on April 8. The calculation was a just one, for on the whole the Ministry appear to have slightly increased their majority, though for the first time since the death of Lucas they were defeated in the City of Dublin, where Lord Henry Fitzgerald and Grattan triumphed over the Court candidates. Among the new members were Arthur O'Connor the United Irishman, and Barrington the historian of the Irish Parliament; and two young men who were born in the same year, and who were destined for a long period to co-operate in the foremost rank of English politics, now for the first time appeared in public life. Robert Stewart, after a severe contest against the Hillsborough interest, was elected in the popular interest; pledged to vote for a Place Bill, a Pension Bill, a disfranchisement of revenue officers, and a reform of that Parliament which a few years later,

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* x. 408-412.

as Lord Castlereagh, he succeeded by the most lavish corruption in overthrowing. Arthur Wellesley, or, as the name was then spelt, Wesley, was already an aide-de-camp at the Castle, and he now took his seat as a supporter of the Government, and appears to have spoken for the first time in seconding an address to the King in January 1793. The new Parliament sat for a fortnight in July in order to pass a vote of credit for 200,000*l.* for the apprehended war with Spain. The vote was carried unanimously, and with the warm approval of Grattan, who only urged that it should be strictly devoted to the military purposes for which it was intended. Parliament was then adjourned and did not sit till the following January.

The signs of combination, agitation, and discontent outside the walls of Parliament were becoming very formidable, and there was a growing conviction that nothing could be done without a real reform of Parliament, and that such a reform could only be achieved by a strong pressure of external opinion. In June 1789 a large number of the principal gentlemen in Ireland, including Charlemont, Grattan, and Ponsonby, formed themselves into a Whig Club for the purpose of maintaining in its integrity the Constitution of 1782; preserving to Ireland 'in all time to come a Parliament of her own, residing within the realm and exclusively invested with all parliamentary privileges and powers,' and endeavouring by all legal and constitutional means to check the extravagance of Government and its corrupt influence in the Legislature. Their object, as Grattan afterwards said, was 'to obtain an internal reform in Parliament, in which they partly succeeded, and to prevent the Union, in which they failed.' The new society was as far as possible from being revolutionary or democratic. Among its original members were an archbishop, a bishop, and twelve peers, and among them were the Duke of Leinster, and Lord Shannon the greatest borough owner of the kingdom. Whatever might be the opinion of its individual members, the club did not as a body demand either a reduction of the franchise or the abolition of nomination boroughs, or the enfranchisement of the Catholics. The measures it stated to be essential were a Place Bill, a Pension Bill, a Bill to repeal or modify the Dublin police, a disqualification of revenue officers, and a curtailment of the unnecessary offices which had

recently been created, and distributed among members of Parliament.

The Whig Club was warmly eulogised by Burke;[1] and it would have been happy if the conduct of the reform question had rested in hands that were at once so responsible and so moderate. The formation of a powerful and connected party of moderate reformers, pledged to seek by all constitutional means the ends which have been stated, was of no small importance; but it was scarcely possible that in a country situated like Ireland, the democratic and levelling principles with which the French Revolution was now intoxicating the most ardent spirits throughout Europe should not have had an extraordinary power. Even in the House of Commons its influence was not wholly unfelt; and two speeches were delivered in the early session of 1790 which were so new and menacing in their tone, and so clearly indicative of the coming storm, that they may well arrest our attention. The speaker was Mr., afterwards Sir Lawrence, Parsons, and at a later period the second Earl of Rosse; and he was already rising rapidly to the front rank among the debaters in the House. Having noticed that since the last session no less than fourteen places had been made simply for the purpose of distributing among members of Parliament; and that this was 'but a supplement to the most corrupt traffic of many old places, to the prostitute disposal of many pensions, and to the public and scandalous barter of the honours of the Crown, all recently perpetrated for the purpose of accomplishing a depraved influence over the members of this House,' he asked, if 'the country gentlemen of Ireland support such a system of flagrant and stupendous corruption, how do they think the people will receive them at the end of the session?' 'Boast,' he continued, 'of the prosperity of your country as you may, and after all I ask what is it but a secondary kingdom? An inferior member of a great Empire, without any movement or orbit of its own? The connection with England has its advantages and disadvantages. I grant that the advantages greatly preponderate, and that if we were well governed we should have every reason to be content. . . . But if we are satisfied with the humility of being but

[1] See Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 219, 220. The original list of the members will be found in Grattan's *Life*, iii. 432–433.

an appendage to another kingdom, we should take care to receive the principal compensation a State can bring: namely, a frugal dispensation of Government. We may pride ourselves that we are a great kingdom, but the fact is that we are scarcely known beyond the boundaries of our shores. Who out of Ireland ever hears of Ireland? What name have we among the nations of the earth? Who fears us? Who respects us? Where are our ambassadors? What treaties do we enter into? With what nation do we make peace or declare war? Are we not a mere cipher in all these, and are not these what give a nation consequence and fame? All these are sacrificed to the connection with England. . . . A suburb to England, we are sunk in her shade. True, we are an independent kingdom; we have an imperial crown distinct from England; but it is a metaphysical distinction, a mere sport for speculative men. . . . Who governs us? English Ministers, or rather the deputies of English Ministers, mere subalterns of office, who never dare to aspire to the dignity of any great sentiment of their own. . . . We are content, and only ask in return for honest and frugal Government. Is it just, is it wise, is it safe to deny it?'

'It is asked why, after all the acquisitions of 1782, there should be discontent? To this I say, that when the country is well governed the people ought to be satisfied, but not before. If a people are ill governed, it signifies little whether they be so in consequence of corruption from abroad or depravity at home. . . . The acquisitions of 1782 freed this country from internal power but not from internal malversation. On the contrary, this country has been governed worse since then than ever it was before; and why? because of these very acquisitions. . . . It has been the object of English Ministers ever since to countervail what we obtained at that period, and substitute a surreptitious and clandestine influence for the open power which the English Legislature was then obliged to relinquish.' 'The people of this island are growing more enlightened every day, and will soon know and feel their power. Near four millions of people in a most defensible country ought, perhaps, to be courted, but ought certainly not to be insulted with the petty, pilfering, jobbing, corrupting tricks of every deputy of a deputy of an English Minister that is sent over here.' 'The people required the concessions which

were made during the American War because they expected to be governed better in consequence of them. Do you think they will be satisfied to find that they are not? Those concessions on the part of the English Parliament I grant were as ample as they well could be, for they were everything short of separation. Let Ministers then beware of what conclusions they may teach the people, if they teach them this, that the attainment of everything short of separation will not attain for them good government.' 'Where, or when, or how, is all this to end? Is the Minister of England himself sure that he sees the end? Can he be sure that this system which has been forming for the coercion of Ireland, may not ultimately cause the dissolution of the Empire?'[1]

The elements of revolution were indeed abundantly provided, and two aspects of the French Revolution had a very special significance for Ireland. It proclaimed as its first principle the abolition of every kind of religious disqualification, and it swept away the whole system of tithes.[2] The triumph of the volunteers in 1782, though it had been used with great moderation, formed a very dangerous precedent of a Legislature overawed or influenced by military force; and the volunteers, though they had dwindled in numbers, and were now generally discountenanced by the better classes, were still a formidable body. In 1790, Charlemont found that the Derry army alone was at least 3,400 strong;[3] and two years later Lord Westmorland ascertained that the volunteer force possessed no less than forty-four cannon. The Presbyterianism of the North, and especially of Belfast, had long been inclined to republicanism. The population of Belfast, according to a paper drawn up by the Government, had increased between 1779 and 1791 from 8,549 to 18,320.

[1] *Parl. Deb.* x. 240–246, 344–348. It is worthy of notice that Wolfe Tone states in his autobiography, that it was about this time that he arrived at the conclusion which directed his whole subsequent policy—that 'the influence of England was the radical vice' of Irish government, and that Ireland would never be independent while the connection with England subsisted. 'In forming this theory,' he says, 'I was exceedingly assisted by an old friend of mine, Sir Lawrence Parsons, whom I look upon as one of the very few honest men in the Irish House of Commons. It was he who first turned my attention on this great question, but I very soon ran far ahead of my master.' Tone's *Life* (American edition), i. 32. Parsons' line of argument appears, indeed, to have been very generally adopted by the United Irishmen.

[2] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, pp. 12, 13.

[3] Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 225.

A Northern Whig Club was speedily established there, in imitation of that at Dublin, but its timid or moderating counsels were not suited for the political temperature. Towards the close of 1790 the Irish Government sent information to England that a dangerous movement had begun among the volunteers at Belfast. Resolutions had been passed, and papers circulated, advocating the abolition of all tithes, or at least of all tithes paid by Protestant Dissenters and Catholics, as well as a searching reform of Parliament and of Administration; eulogising the 'glorious spirit' shown by the French in 'adopting the wise system of Republican Government and abrogating the enormous power and abused influence' of the clergy; inviting the Protestant Dissenters to support by all their influence the enfranchisement of the Catholics, and to co-operate with the Catholics in advocating parliamentary reform and the abolition of tithes. The volunteers were reminded that whatever constitutional progress Ireland had obtained had been due to them, and they were urged to make every effort at once to fill their ranks.[1]

In July 1791 the anniversary of the French Revolution was celebrated at Belfast with great enthusiasm. All the volunteers of the neighbourhood attended. An address drawn up in a strain of the most fulsome admiration was sent to France. Democratic toasts were drunk, and speeches made eulogising Paine, Washington, and the French Revolution, and demanding an equal representation in Parliament, and the abolition of the remaining Popery laws. A resolution was shortly after drawn up by the first volunteer company, in favour of the abolition of religious disqualifications, and it was responded to by an address of thanks from some Catholic bodies. This was said to have been the first considerable sign of that union of the Presbyterians and Catholics which led to the formation of the United Irish Society.[2] Paine's 'Rights of Man' was about the same time widely distributed in the North, and it made many converts. His controversy with Burke 'and the gigantic event which gave rise to it changed in an instant the politics of Ireland. . . . In a little time the French Revolution became the text of every man's political creed.'[3] 'The language

[1] Westmorland to Grenville, Oct. 5, 17, 1790.

[2] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, pp. 14, 15.

[3] Tone's *Life*, i. 42, 43.

and bent of the conduct of these Dissenters,' wrote Westmorland in July, 'is to unite with the Catholics, and their union would be very formidable. That union is not yet made, and I believe and hope it never could be.'[1]

In the September of the same year an extremely able pamphlet appeared under the signature of 'A Northern Whig,' urging the necessity of a reform of Parliament, and, as a means of attaining it, a close alliance between the Catholics and the Presbyterians. It was written by Theobald Wolfe Tone, a young Protestant lawyer of no small ability, but much more fitted by his daring, adventurous, and enthusiastic character, for military enterprise and for political conspiracy than for the disputes of the law courts. He had for a short time been connected with the Whig Club, but soon broke away from it, and was passionately imbued with the principles of French democracy. His pamphlet is especially remarkable for the clearness with which it sounded a note which now became common in Irish popular politics—unqualified hatred of the Irish Parliament, and profound contempt for the revolution of 1782. He described that revolution as 'the most bungling, imperfect business that ever threw ridicule on a lofty epithet by assuming it unworthily.' It doubled the value of the property of every borough owner in the kingdom, but it confessedly left three-fourths of the Irish people without even the semblance of political rights, and the remaining fourth completely helpless in the hands of an alien Government. As all the counties and considerable towns of Ireland combined only returned eighty-two members, the parliamentary direction rested wholly with the purchased borough members. All that had really been effected in 1782 was to increase the corrupt price by which the Government of Ireland was carried on. 'Before 1782 England bound us by her edict. It was an odious and not very safe exertion of power, but it cost us nothing. Since 1782 we are bound by English influence acting through our own Parliament,' and paid for out of our own resources. In England 'the people suffer in theory by the unequal distribution of the elective franchise; but practically it is perhaps visionary to expect a Government that shall more carefully or steadily follow their real interests. No

[1] Westmorland to Dundas (private), July 26, 1791.

man can there be a Minister on any other terms.' In Ireland, alone among European countries, the Government is not only unnational but anti-national, conducted by men whose first duty is to represent another nation, and by every method in their power to repress every Irish interest which could in the most distant way interfere with the commerce or policy or patronage of England. This is esteemed the measure of their skill and of their success, and it is always their chief recommendation to the favours of the Crown. How successfully they accomplished their task was sufficiently shown by the fact that the Irish Parliament, by its own law, excluded itself from a commerce with half the known world, in the interest of a monopolising English company, and had just voted a military expenditure of 200,000*l.* to secure the very commerce from which Ireland was for ever excluded.[1] Without a searching parliamentary reform the overwhelming stress of English influence in the Irish Legislature can never be resisted, and it is a wild dream to suppose that such a reform could be attained without the efforts of the whole nation. This was the error which ignominiously wrecked the Convention of 1783 in spite of the genius of Flood, and left Ireland struck with political paralysis at a time when the spirit of reform has descended on all other nations and when the most inveterate abuses are withering beneath its touch. As long as the Irish sects are at enmity with each other, it will be always easy for the Administration by playing on the fears of the Protestants and the hopes of the Catholics to defy them both. But if the whole body of the people demand a reform of Parliament, which will include the concession of the elective franchise to the Catholics, Ireland will then at last obtain an honest and an independent representation.

It was the main object of this pamphlet to prove that no serious danger would attend the enfranchisement of the Catholics, and that members of the two religions might sit side by side in an Irish Legislature as they did in the French National Assembly and in the American Congress. The last remnants of Jacobitism, he argued, had vanished with the extinction of the

[1] Tone had already written a pamphlet under the signature of Hibernicus, to show that Ireland should take no part in an English war with Spain about Nootka Sound. Grattan, as we have seen, had fully supported the vote of credit for that war.

Stuarts. 'The wealthy and moderate party of the Catholic persuasion with the whole Protestant interest would form a barrier against invasion of property' if any party among the Catholics were mad and wicked enough to attempt it. A national provision for the education of the Catholic priests would remove 'that which daily experience shows to be one of the heavy misfortunes of Ireland, that the consciences, the morals, and the religion of the bulk of the nation are in the hands of men of low birth, low feelings, low habits, and no education.' The clouds of religious bigotry and intolerance were vanishing rapidly before the great light that had arisen in France. The Catholic gentry were fully fitted for the exercise of power, and considering the great disproportion of property and therefore of power in the hands of Protestants, even a reformed Parliament would consist mainly of Protestants. At the same time Tone added one passage which is not a little remarkable as coming from a writer who in the general type of his politics was an unqualified democrat. 'If,' he wrote, 'there be serious grounds for dreading a majority of Catholics, they may be removed in a very obvious mode. Extend the elective franchise to such Catholics only as have a freehold of ten pounds by the year, and on the other hand strike off the disgrace to our Constitution and our country, the wretched tribe of forty-shilling freeholders whom we see driven to their octennial market by their landlords, as much their property as the sheep or the bullocks which they brand with their names.'[1]

It is said that not less than ten thousand copies of this pamphlet were sold, and its teaching was rapidly diffused. The letters of Lord Westmorland show the activity with which papers of the same tenor were disseminated during the summer of 1791; and in October, Wolfe Tone founded at Belfast the first Society of United Irishmen. It consisted of thirty-six original members, and was intended to aim at 'an equal representation of all the people of Ireland.' It adopted as its first principles three resolutions asserting 'that the weight of English influence in the government of this country is so great as to require a cordial union among all the people of Ireland to maintain that balance which is essential to the preservation of our liberties and

[1] This remarkable pamphlet, as well as the other works of Wolfe Tone, will be found appended to the American edition of his life.

the extension of our commerce; that the sole constitutional mode by which this influence can be opposed is by a complete and radical reform of the representation of the people in Parliament, and that no reform is just which does not include Irishmen of every religious persuasion.' Very soon a branch of the Society was established at Dublin. Napper Tandy, who had long been working as a demagogue in the more obscure forms of Irish agitation, was the Secretary of the Dublin Society. A lawyer named Simon Butler, brother of Lord Mountgarret, was the chairman. A test was adopted which each member of the society subscribed, pledging him 'in the presence of God' to devote all his abilities and influence to the attainment of an impartial and adequate representation of the Irish nation in Parliament, and as a means to this end, to forward a union and co-operation of Irishmen of all religious persuasions. In December, the Society issued a circular letter expounding its principles, and inviting the people of Ireland of all creeds to establish similar societies in every district; and in the beginning of the following year, a newspaper called 'The Northern Star,' which soon attained a great circulation and influence, was established at Belfast to advocate their views. Its editor was a woollen draper named Samuel Neilson, the son of a Presbyterian minister, and one of the most active original members of the United Society of Belfast.

The Society of United Irishmen was at first constituted for the simple purpose of forming a political union of Protestants and Catholics, and thus obtaining a liberal measure of parliamentary reform. In the remarkable memoir drawn up after the rebellion, by Thomas Emmet, McNevin, and Arthur O'Connor, which is the clearest and most succinct statement of the views of the originators, it is positively asserted that although from the beginning they clearly perceived 'that the chief support of the borough interest in Ireland, was the weight of English influence,' the question of separation was not at first so much as agitated among them, and that it was only after a considerable period that the conviction that parliamentary reform could not be attained without a revolution, led them, timidly and reluctantly, to republicanism; and the writers assert that even after a large proportion of the members had become republicans, they were convinced that the whole body would

have stopped short at reform. It is probable that this statement is true with regard to a large proportion of the first leaders, but it is certain that there were some among them, who from the beginning were more than mere speculative republicans, and who clearly saw that revolution was the natural issue of their movement. Among these must be reckoned both Wolfe Tone and Napper Tandy. The former has frankly acknowledged in his autobiography, that a desire to break the connection with England was one of his first objects, and that hatred of England was so deeply rooted in his nature that 'it was rather an instinct than a principle.'[1] The journal which he wrote at Belfast, at the time when he was engaged in founding the Society, shows that he was at that time speculating much on the possibility of Ireland subsisting independently of Great Britain, and on the prosperity she might in that case attain, and in a letter written by him some months earlier, he expressed this opinion most explicitly. 'My unalterable opinion,' he wrote, 'is that the bane of Irish prosperity is in the influence of England. I believe that influence will ever be extended while the connection between the countries continues. Nevertheless, as I know that opinion is for the present too hardy, though a very little time may establish it universally, I have not made it a part of the resolutions; I have only proposed to set up a reformed Parliament as a barrier against that mischief, which every honest man that will open his eyes must see in every instance overbears the interest of Ireland. I have not said one word that looks like a wish for separation, though I give it to you and your friends as my most decided opinion that such an event would be a regeneration to this country.'[2]

From the beginning of the French Revolution, Tandy is said to have carried on a correspondence with French agents or

[1] *Life of Wolfe Tone*, i. 55. In another place he writes: 'To subvert the tyranny of our execrable Government, to break the connection with England (the never-failing source of all our political evils), and to assert the independence of my country, these were my objects. To unite the whole people of Ireland . . . to substitute the common name of Irishmen in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic, and Dissenter, these were my means.' Ibid. p. 51.

[2] *Secret Committee*, pp. 38, 39, 50–56. This letter was intercepted and sent to England early in July (Westmorland to Sydney, July 11, 1791). It was accompanied by a sketch of a proposed secret society modelled after the Freemasons, intended to advocate in Ireland the rights of men, and to correspond with the Jacobin Club in Paris and with different reform societies in England.

politicians, and the Belfast members of the Society appear to have been especially intoxicated by the French Revolution. In general, however, the Society differed from its predecessors rather in tendency than in principle. One of the points most prominent in the confidential correspondence of Tone is his great dislike to the Whig Club, and to the whole type of Whig politics: 'They are not sincere friends to the popular cause, they dread the people as much as the Castle does.' He described them as peddling with insufficient measures, and he desired above all things that the respect for the names of Charlemont and Grattan should be dismissed, and the conduct of the national movement placed in other and more energetic hands.[1]

The opposition so strongly stated between the two types of policy was a very real one. Grattan was quite as earnest as Tone in advocating the enfranchisement of the Catholics and the reform of Parliament. He was quite as fully convinced that it should be the supreme end of every Irish patriot gradually to blend into a single body the descendants of the conquerors and of the conquered. But in every period of his career he maintained the necessity of the connection with England, and in times of danger and of war there was scarcely any sacrifice he was not prepared to make to support Imperial interests. He had nothing of the French and cosmopolitan sympathies of the English Whigs, and he always made it a vital principle of his Irish policy to discourage all hostility towards England. The spirit of the United Irishmen was from the beginning wholly different. They believed, in opposition to Grattan, that it was possible for Ireland to subsist and flourish as a separate State, and their attitude towards Great Britain, when it was not one of disaffection and hostility, was at least one of alienation and indifference.

Grattan's theory of parliamentary reform, again, was essentially a Whig one. He looked with undisguised abhorrence on the subversive and levelling theory of government which the French Revolution had introduced into the world; that 'Gallic plant,' as he picturesquely described it, 'whose fruit is death, though it is not the tree of knowledge.' He always believed that a country with social and religious divisions, and antecedents

[1] *Secret Committee*, pp. 38, 39.

of property such as exist in Ireland, is totally unfit for democracy, and he clearly saw that to govern Ireland on democratic principles would lead to political ruin. Although he strenuously maintained that religious belief should not form the line of political division or exclusion, he was in one sense a strong advocate for Protestant ascendency. At every period of his life he contended that Ireland could only be well governed when its political system was so organised that the direction and control of the country was in the hands of Irish property and Irish intelligence. We have already seen how he denounced the profligate manner in which peerages were bestowed, on the ground that it was destroying the moral authority of an influence which was exceedingly necessary in Ireland. In one of his speeches he predicted that the attempts to pervert and disgrace the peerage were certain to lead men to desire its extinction, and declared that a Minister who pursued such a course was a pioneer to the leveller, for he was demolishing the moral influences that support authority, rank, and subordination.[1] In another he asserted that 'no country was ever temperately or securely conducted' without an Upper Chamber.[2] In a third he declared that, bad as was the existing state of Irish representation, he would prefer it to the system of personal and individual representation advocated by the United Irishmen, which would 'destroy the influence of landed property,' and thus give up the 'vital and fundamental articles of the British Constitution;' and he proceeded to predict with a terrible distinctness what an Irish Parliament would be, if it were disconnected from the property of the country. 'This plan of personal representation,' he said, 'from a revolution of power would speedily lead to a revolution of property, and become a plan of plunder as well as a scene of confusion. For if you transfer the power of the State to those who have nothing in the country, they will afterwards transfer the property. . . . Of such a representation the first ordinance would be robbery, accompanied with the circumstance incidental to robbery, murder.' 'The best method,' he said, in the same speech, 'of securing the parliamentary Constitution, is to embody in its support the mass of property, which will be generally found to include the mass of

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xi. 132.

[2] Ibid. xiii. 14.

talents.'[1] He severely censured the policy of the Government towards the Catholics in 1792, because it tended 'to detach and divide the landed interest of the Catholics from the body at large,' and in this way, 'to destroy the subordination of the common people, and to set population adrift from the influence of property.'[2] He was strongly opposed, it is true, to the Government by an oligarchy which subsisted in Ireland, but he opposed it mainly on the ground that it so narrowed the basis of representation that the great mass of freeholders, leaseholders, and resident trading interests in the country possessed not more than a fifth of the representation.[3] Of his own policy he said, 'It leads from personal representation, not to it; it ascertains representation to property, and to the propertied community, and whatever force, weight, influence, or authority both possess, unites them against the attempts in favour of personal representation.'[4] And a very similar train of thought continually appears in his opposition to the Union. One of his strongest arguments against that measure was that it would do what in Ireland was peculiarly dangerous, take the government of the country out of the hands of the resident gentry, shatter or seriously weaken the authority of property and education, and thus throw the political guidance of the nation into the hands of demagogues and charlatans. I have elsewhere quoted his striking prophecy that Ireland would one day avenge herself for the loss of her Parliament and Constitution by sending into the English Parliament 'a hundred of the greatest scoundrels in the kingdom.'

This type of policy is not popular in the present day, but it is necessary clearly to understand it, in order to estimate truly the position of Grattan in Irish history. With two or three exceptions the reforming party which followed his banner in Parliament was wholly alien to the spirit of the French Revolution; and even in advocating parliamentary reform, the language of the most prominent members of the party was much more akin to that of Burke than to that of Paine. 'The right of universal suffrage,' said one of them, 'is utterly incompatible with the preservation of property in this country or any other.

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xiv. 74–87.
[2] Ibid. xiii. 8.
[3] Ibid. xiv. 76.
[4] Ibid.

I know well that the means by which the hands of the many are held off from the possessions of the few are a nice and artificial contrivance of civilised society. The physical strength is theirs already. If we add to that the strength of convention and compact, all is at their mercy.' And the same speaker added that the opposition between the French party and the Whig Club in Ireland was so strong that the former would prefer the present system with all its anomalies to Ponsonby's Reform Bill.[1] Among all the considerable politicians in the Irish Parliament, Parsons was the one who in general approached most nearly to the United Irishmen. But on the question of the true principle of representation the language of Parsons was emphatically Whig. 'The distemper of the times,' he said, 'is that most men consider how they shall get political power, not how they shall get good government. . . . Speculators may talk of the right of the many, but the true consideration is the good of the many, and that is to dispose the franchise so that it will produce the best representatives.'[2]

The distinction between these views and those of the United Irishmen was very manifest. The Whig Club, as we have seen, originally confined itself to supporting measures of secondary reform, which had been carried in England, such as Pension Bills, Place Bills, and a disqualification of revenue officials; and when at last in 1794 Ponsonby and Grattan introduced a Reform Bill, it was much less ambitious even than the Reform Bills of Flood. It left the suffrage and the duration of Parliament entirely unchanged, but it proposed to give an additional member to each county and to the cities of Dublin and Cork, and to enlarge the constituencies of the boroughs by throwing into them a considerable section of the adjoining country.[3] All these measures proceeded on the assumption that the Constitution of Ireland was essentially a good one, and might be amended without subverting any of its fundamental principles. In the eyes of the United Irishmen the boasted Constitution of Ireland was a mere caricature of representation, and they proposed a complete reconstruction on the most

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xiv. 89.
[2] Ibid. p. 102.
[3] Grattan, however, while supporting strongly this reform, confessed that it did not go as far as he wished. *Parl. Deb.* xiv. 75.

approved principles of French democracy. They proposed that Ireland should be divided into three hundred equal electoral districts, each of them returning one member, that every full-grown male should have a vote, subject only to the condition of six months' residence, that the representatives should be paid and exempt from all property qualification, and that Parliaments should be annual.[1]

While this democratic spirit was rising up among the reformers, a similar spirit was appearing in that body which was especially devoted to the interests of the Catholics. Since the quarrel of 1783 the Catholic Committee had led a very dormant existence, and it was a common feeling that the initiative in matters relating to the Catholics should be left to the Government. This appears to have been the decided opinion of Grattan, who knew that the Opposition were by no means unanimous on the question, and who keenly felt that it would be very unfavourable to the Catholic cause if it were made a party question. The direction of the Catholic body had hitherto been almost altogether in the hands of their prelates, and of a few noblemen—among whom Lord Kenmare was the most conspicuous—closely connected with the Government. But another type of Catholic leader, springing out of the rich trading class, was now appearing, and it found a leader of some ability in John Keogh, a Dublin tradesman, who for many years exercised much influence over Irish politics.

Several circumstances were conspiring to make this party ascendant in the Catholic Committee. Towards the close of 1790 the Catholic Committee waited upon Major Hobart, requesting him to support a petition to Parliament which asked for nothing specific, but simply prayed that the case of the Catholics should be taken into consideration; but their request was refused, and they could not find a single member to present their petition to Parliament. In the course of the same year an address of loyalty, intended to be presented to Lord Westmorland by the Catholics, on the occasion of a visit of the Lord-Lieutenant to Cork, was returned to them, because it concluded with a hope that their loyalty would lead to a further relaxation of the penal code. In the beginning of 1791 a

[1] Madden's *United Irishmen*, i. 239, 240.

deputation from the Catholic Committee went to the Castle with a list of the penal laws which they were anxious to have modified or repealed, but they were dismissed without even the courtesy of an answer.[1]

Lord Kenmare and the leading gentry on the Committee would have gladly desisted from all further agitation; they regarded with extreme aversion the projects of union for the purpose of achieving parliamentary reform held out by the Dissenters, and a quarrel broke out on these points between the two sections of the Committee, which continued during a great part of 1791. At last the party of Lord Kenmare, which included most of the country gentry, proposed a resolution leaving the measure and extent of future relaxations of the disabilities wholly to the Legislature; but the more democratic members of the Committee successfully resisted it. Lord Kenmare and more than sixty of the principal gentry of the party then formally seceded from the Committee,[2] and presented, in December 1791, a separate address to the Lord-Lieutenant, asking for a further repeal of the laws affecting the Catholics, but leaving the extent wholly to the Legislature.[3] The original Committee thus passed completely under the influence of the more democratic party, and it was noticed as a symptom of the new spirit appearing in the Catholic body, that resolutions were passed in almost all the counties and large towns of the kingdom approving of its conduct, and censuring the sixty-eight seceders.[4]

The great and rapid growth of the Catholic commercial interest is one of the facts most constantly adverted to in the early years of George III., and it had given a new independence to the Catholic body. Their political importance had been greatly increased by the tendency to unite the Catholic question with the question of parliamentary reform which had appeared among the reformers of the North, and a considerable amount of new and energetic life was infused into the Catholic Committee by an election which took place in the spring of 1790.[5]

[1] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, pp. 18–20.

[2] On this secession compare McNevin, p. 20; Plowden, ii. 334; Tone's *Life*, i. 48–50. The materials for forming an opinion about it are miserably inadequate.

[3] Plowden, ii. appendix pp. 173–175.

[4] McNevin, p. 21.

[5] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 152, 153.

The position of the Catholics was, it is true, very different from what it had been twenty years before, but it may be questioned whether their sense of their grievances had proportionately abated. They were no longer a crushed, torpid, impoverished body with scarcely any interest in political affairs. The relaxations that enabled them to live in peace, and the industrial prosperity that enabled them to acquire wealth, education, and local importance, had retained in the country enterprising and ambitious men who in a former generation would have sought a career in France, or Austria, or Spain. Every great movement which had taken place since the accession of George III. had contributed to deepen their sense of the anomaly of their position. The Octennial Act had created a strong political life in Ireland, but the Catholics alone were excluded from its benefits. The American struggle had made it a commonplace of politics that representation and taxation were inseparably connected, but the denomination which included some four-fifths of the Irish people did not possess the smallest control over the national revenue. The Revolution of 1782 had placed Ireland, ostensibly at least, in the rank of free and self-governed kingdoms, but it left the Catholics with no more political rights than the serfs of Russia or of Poland. The very law that enabled them to acquire land, made them more sensible of the disqualification, which in their case alone, deprived land of the franchise which the Constitution had annexed to it. The French Revolution had persuaded multitudes that government is the inalienable right of the majority, and even among those who repudiated the principles of Rousseau and Paine, it had greatly raised the standard of political requirements, and increased the hostility to political inequalities and disqualifications.

It was impossible, indeed, that in such a state of society, intelligent Catholics could contemplate their own position in Ireland without feelings of the keenest humiliation and resentment. Though they represented the immense majority of the people, they were wholly excluded from the executive, from the legislative, from the judicial powers of the State; from all right of voting in parliamentary and municipal elections; from all control over the national expenditure; from all share in the

patronage of the Crown. They were marked out by the law as a distinct nation, to be maintained in separation from the Protestants, and in permanent subjection to them. Judged by the measure of its age, the Irish Parliament had shown great liberality during the last twenty years, but the injury and the insult of disqualification still met the Catholic at every turn. From the whole of the great and lucrative profession of the law he was still absolutely excluded, and by the letter of the law the mere fact of a lawyer marrying a Catholic wife and educating his children as Catholics incapacitated him from pursuing his profession. Land and trade had been thrown open to Catholics almost without restrictions, but the Catholic tenant still found himself at a frequent disadvantage, because he had no vote and no influence with those who administered local justice, and the Catholic trader because he had no voice in the corporations of the towns. Catholics had begun to take a considerable place among the moneyed men of Ireland; but when the Bank of Ireland was founded in 1782, it was specially provided that no Catholics might be enrolled among its directors. Medicine was one of the few professions from which they had never been excluded, and some of them had risen to large practice in it, but even here they were subject to galling distinctions. They were incapacitated from holding any of the three medical professorships on the University establishment, or any of the four professorships at the School of Physic, or the more recently created clinical professorship; and the law, while excluding native Catholics from these professorships, actually ordered that, for three months previous to the nomination to a vacancy in them, invitations should be circulated through Europe inviting Protestants of all nations to compete for them.[1] Catholic physicians were excluded from all situations on the army establishment, from the offices of State physician or surgeon, and from a crowd of places held under charter, patent, or incorporation; and as they could not take the rank of Fellow in the College of Physicians, they were unable to hold any office in that body.

The social effects of the code continued with little abatement, though mere theological animosity had almost died away.

[1] 25 Geo. III. c. 42.

The political helplessness of the lower orders in their relation with the upper classes had injuriously affected the whole tone of manners, and the few Catholic gentry could not but feel that they were members of an inferior class, living under the stigma and the disqualifications of the law. Most Catholics who had risen to wealth had done so as merchants or cattle dealers, and the mercantile classes in Ireland had very little social position. The old Catholic gentry lived much apart, and had but small intercourse with the Protestants. The exclusion of Catholics from the bar was in this respect peculiarly mischievous, for of all professions the bar is that which does most to bring men of various religions into close and frequent contact. There were convivial clubs in Ireland in which it was a by-law that no papist should be admitted,[1] and Burke, probably, scarcely exaggerated when he asserted that there were thousands of persons of the upper orders in Ireland, who had never in their lives conversed with a Catholic, unless they happened to talk to their gardener's workmen, or to ask their way, when they had lost it, in their sports.[2]

It was quite evident that such a state of society was thoroughly unnatural and demoralising, and it was equally evident that it could not possibly be permanent. One great work of the Irish Parliament during the past generation had been the gradual removal of religious disqualifications and monopolies, but the most serious part of the task was still to be accomplished, and the French Revolution had forced on the question, to an immediate issue. The process of slow enfranchisements, which had once been gratefully received, was scarcely possible in the changed condition of the public mind. A declaration issued by the Catholic Committee in October 1791, demanding in strong terms a complete abolition of all parts of the penal code, was a significant sign of the new spirit which had arisen, and it was evident that the principles of the North had found some lodgment in the minds of the new Catholic leaders. The Catholic Committee was reorganised, and placed more completely under the influence of the democratic party; and despairing of help from the Administration of Ireland,

[1] McKenna's *Essays on the Affairs of Ireland in* 1791–1793, p. 26.

[2] Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe.

it resolved to send a deputation to England. The resolution was accomplished, and in January 1792 Keogh and four other delegates laid the petition of the Catholics before the King.

The task which now lay before the Ministers was one which demanded the highest statesmanship, and the whole future history of Ireland depended mainly on the manner in which it was accomplished. If the enfranchisement of the Catholics could be successfully carried out, if the chasm that yawned between the two great sections of the Irish people could be finally bridged, if an identity of interests and sympathies could be established between the members of the two creeds, Ireland would indeed become a nation, and she might reasonably look forward to a continuous growth of power and prosperity. If on the other hand the task was tardily or unskilfully accomplished, there were dangers of the most terrible and the most permanent character to be feared. Religious animosities and class antipathies which had long been slumbering might be revived in all their fierceness. The elements of anarchy and agitation which lay only too abundantly in a population poor, ignorant, turbulent, and superstitious beyond almost any in Europe, might be let loose and turned into politics. The Catholics of Ireland, who had hitherto scarcely awakened to political life, and whose leaders had been uniformly loyal, and much more inclined to lean towards the English Government than towards the Irish Parliament, might be permanently alienated from the connection. In the clash of discordant elements, Ireland might be once more cursed with the calamities of civil war; and confiscations and penal laws had placed landed property so exclusively in the hands of the ascendant class, that a danger still graver than rebellion might be feared. It was that which Burke truly called 'the most irreconcilable quarrel that can divide a nation—a struggle for the landed property of the whole kingdom.'[1]

While the sentiments I have described were rapidly extending among the more intelligent Catholics and among the Presbyterians of the North, the governing classes in Ireland experienced a full measure of that dread of reform and innova-

[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 81.

tion which the French Revolution had made predominant among men in authority. The Catholic question now presented itself to them, not as in 1778 and 1782 as a question of religious toleration, and of the removal of penal inflictions, but as a question of the transfer of political power and of the destruction of an old monopoly of representation. It was also avowedly and ostentatiously associated with the demand for a searching parliamentary reform which would break down the system of nomination boroughs, and establish the representation on a broad popular basis. No prospect could be more alarming to the small group of men who controlled the Government and almost monopolised the patronage of Ireland. The Chancellor, Fitzgibbon, was steadily opposed to all concessions to the Catholics, and he devoted his great ability and his arrogant but indomitable will to rallying the party of the Opposition. The Beresfords, the Elys, and several other of the great borough owners, and in general the officials who were most closely connected with the Castle, were equally violent in their opposition.

In England, however, different motives were at work. Pitt and the majority of the other Ministers were free from every vestige of religious intolerance, and the events of the French Revolution had thrown them into close alliance with the Catholics of Europe. It was not merely a question of political alliance but of genuine sympathy, for Catholicism was the most natural and most powerful moral force that could be opposed to that spirit of antichristian revolution which was now assuming such a menacing aspect in Europe. The overtures made by the revolutionary Protestant Dissenters to the Catholics justly appeared very alarming to the English Ministers. Hitherto it had been their policy to act as the champion or at least the protector of the Catholics; not, indeed, risking any serious convulsion for their sake, but on the whole favouring the abolition of the penal laws, moderating their administration, protecting the Catholics from local tyranny. There seemed now some danger that a power which was naturally conservative should be thrown into the opposite scale, and that the Catholic relief question, which the Ministers were inclined to favour, should be employed to obtain a parliamentary reform to which they were strongly opposed. It appeared, therefore, to the

English Ministers a matter of great importance to break this incipient alliance, and by giving greater weight to the Catholics to turn them into a conservative influence in the Constitution.

There were two other considerations which had great weight. In the first place the question of the position of the English Catholics had been again taken up. The circumstances of Catholicism in England and Ireland were entirely different, but experience had shown that legislation on this subject in one country was tolerably sure to be followed by a demand for legislation in the other.

I have already related the history of Mitford's Act, which in 1791 relieved English Catholics who took the oath provided by the statute, from all the laws against recusancy which had been passed under Elizabeth and James I.; restored them to a full right of celebrating their worship and educating their children; admitted them to be barristers, solicitors, attorneys, clerks, and notaries, and freed them from several petty and vexatious restrictions to which they had been liable. This measure, as we have seen, was carried with the concurrence of both sections in the Parliament, and it naturally strengthened the claim of the Irish Catholics for a larger measure of relief.

Another circumstance which was favourable to the Catholic cause was the influence of Edmund Burke, who had just broken away from the old Opposition and entered into alliance with the Government. Burke had himself married a Catholic lady, and his sympathies with his Catholic countrymen were both strong and steady. As early as 1765 he had treated of their wrongs in his 'Tracts upon the Popery Code,' and he recurred to the subject in writings in 1778, in 1780, and in 1782.[1] At the time of which I am now writing he was, perhaps, in the zenith of his influence. In 1790 his 'Reflections on the French Revolution' had appeared, and it exercised a greater influence than any political writing in England, at least since the days of Swift. He was regarded as the special and greatest advocate and representative of Conservative principles in England, and his voice was therefore especially weighty when he supported a measure of reform.

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 39.

In his letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe, which was written and published in the beginning of 1792, and still more in his private correspondence, his policy was clearly disclosed. He was prepared to go as far as a complete or almost complete removal of incapacities, 'but leisurely, by degrees, and portion by portion.'[1] He urged the absolute necessity of blending the two great sections of the Irish people, the extreme danger as well as the extreme injustice of maintaining a system of permanent political monopoly, the certainty that such a system must one day break down, the danger of persuading the Catholics that their only hope of entering the Constitution was by the assistance of democratic Dissenters. 'If you should make this experiment at last,' he wrote, 'under the pressure of any necessity, you never can do it well.' 'At present you may make the desired admission without altering the system of your representation in the smallest degree or in any part. You may leave that deliberation of a parliamentary change or reform, if ever you should think fit to engage in it, uncomplicated and unembarrassed with the other question;' you may 'measure your concessions' and proceed by degrees without 'unfixing old interests' at once. 'Reflect seriously on the possible consequences of keeping in the hearts of your community a bank of discontent, every hour accumulating, upon which every description of seditious men may draw at pleasure.'

The difficulties and dangers of the question, if it was taken up at once and in the spirit that has been indicated, seemed to him enormously exaggerated. He reminded Langrishe that the English Parliament had very recently given to Canada a popular representative by the choice of the landholders, and an aristocratic representative at the choice of the Crown, and that no religious disqualification was introduced in either case. It was said that the Irish Catholics had been reduced by the long depression of the law to the state of a mob, and that 'whenever they came to act many of them would act exactly like a mob, without temper, measure, or foresight.' If that be the case, ought not Irish statesmen to apply at once 'a remedy to the real cause of the evil'? 'If the disorder you speak of be real and considerable, you ought to raise an aristocratic interest, that is, an interest of property

[1] *Correspondence*, iii. 529.

and education amongst them, and to strengthen by every prudent means the authority and influence of men of that description.' It was one excellence of our Constitution, that elective rights are always attached rather to property than to person. In Ireland the standard of qualification may be too low or not judiciously chosen, and it may be a question whether it may not be prudent 'to raise a step or two the qualifications of the Catholic voters.' For his own part, however, he doubted it. 'If you were to-morrow to put the Catholic freeholder on the footing of the most favoured forty-shilling Protestant freeholder, you know that such is the actual state of Ireland, this would not make a sensible alteration in almost any *one* election in the kingdom. The effect in their favour even defensively would be infinitely slow.'[1] In the present state of Europe, he argued, 'it is of infinite moment that matters of grace should emanate from the old sovereign authority.'

His estimate of the different parties in Ireland is curious and far from complimentary. The difference between the Irish Protestant and the Irish Catholic appeared to him to be mainly that between 'the cat looking out of the window, and the cat looking in at the window,' between 'being in or out of power.' The Protestants had been somewhat specially corrupted by the long monopoly of 'jobbish power,' and the Catholics by continued habits of servility.[2] On both sides religious animosity was almost extinct, and he actually suggested that it was quite within the limits of probability that in the general decadence of theology the Catholics might, through political reasons, be converted into Protestant Dissenters.[3] Their clergy, he thought, had at no time within his observation much influence over their people. 'I have never known an instance (until a few of them were called into action by the manœuvres of the Castle), that in secular concerns they took any part at all. . . . Though not wholly without influence . . . they have rather less than any other clergy I know.'[4] As for the Protestants, they have lost most of their old prejudices. 'They are jobbers as their fathers were, but with this difference, their fathers had false principles. The present race, I suspect,

[1] Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe.
[2] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 435.
[3] Letter to Langrishe.
[4] Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 12.

have none. . . . They have a reasonable share of good nature. If they could be once got to think that the Catholics were human creatures, and that they lost no job by thinking them such, I am convinced that they would soon, very soon indeed, be led to show some regard to their country.'[1] The difficulty of inducing them to give full political privileges to Catholics lay chiefly in the selfish interests of a small junto of monopolists. In a curiously candid letter to his son, he expressed his wish that the Catholics would 'leave off the topic of which some of them are so fond, that of attributing the continuance of their grievances to English interests or dispositions, to which they suppose the welfare of Ireland is sacrificed.' No notion, he declared, could be more groundless. Englishmen were perfectly indifferent to the question whether Catholics had or had not a share in the election of members of the Irish Parliament. 'Since the independency (and even before) the jobs of that Government are almost wholly in their hands.' 'I have never known any of the successive Governments in my time, influenced by any [other] passion relative to Ireland than the wish that they should hear of it and of its concerns as little as possible.' 'The present set of Ministers partake of that disposition in a larger measure than any of their predecessors with whom I have been acquainted,' and the whole Government of Ireland has been willingly left to 'a junto of jobbers.'[2]

The peculiar position of Edmund Burke led the Catholic Committee to take a step of much importance. They had for some time been accustomed to seek literary and other help outside their own body, and they now determined to ask Richard Burke, the only son of Edmund Burke, to act as their paid adviser. He was a practising barrister, and his selection as the professional representative of the Catholics seemed a most effectual answer to those who accused them of sympathising with the French Revolution, and was at the same time likely to enlist in the cause the influence, the counsel, and perhaps the pen of a man who had then great weight with the Ministers, and a supreme influence over English public opinion. The appointment was made in August 1790, before the separation of

[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 438, 439.
[2] Ibid. iii. 525, iv. 28, 29.

Lord Kenmare and his party from the Catholic Committee, but the services of Richard Burke appear at first to have been exclusively literary, and they did not prevent him from proceeding to Coblentz on a mission to the French princes, who were in that city.[1] On his return, however, towards the close of 1791, he was at once invited to take a more active part, and especially to solicit the Ministers in behalf of the Catholics.[2] In the course of December he had conversations on the subject with Dundas, and also with Hobart, who had for a short time come over from Ireland. He was instructed by the Catholic Committee to ask that the Roman Catholics might be admitted to all departments of the law, to the magistracy, and to the minor offices of county administration; that they might be entitled to serve in all cases both on grand and petty juries, and that they might obtain the elective franchise, but only in the counties.

Although his talents appear to have been greatly over-estimated by his father, Richard Burke was in truth by no means destitute of ability, but he displayed a rather unusual measure of the common and characteristic faults of amateur diplomatists. His want of tact, his tendency to exaggeration and overstatement, his meddling, officious, and dictatorial demeanour, were soon painfully conspicuous. When he went to Ireland, Dundas warned him that the English Government could hold no communication on the Catholic question except through the Irish Government, and that he must therefore communicate exclusively with it.[3] He easily gathered that the Ministers were convinced that it was necessary to grant a measure of relief to the Catholics, in order to win them over to their side. He also gathered clearly that while the Ministers were determined to make some concessions, they were disposed to abandon the capital one of the elective franchise, not on account of any English reluctance, but because of the determined hostility among the leading men in the Irish Government and Parliament. These opinions Richard Burke appears to have fully declared, and in the course of a few months' residence in Ireland,

[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 154, 490; Macknight's *Life of Burke*, iii. 422, 423.

[2] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 490.

[3] Ibid. iii. 366.

he very unduly raised the hopes of the Catholics, flung the Irish Government into a paroxysm of jealousy and anger, entered into negotiation with a number of independent interests in the Irish Parliament, and greatly embarrassed the English Government. In September 1792, the Catholic Committee finally broke with him.

We must now proceed to examine more particularly the real intentions of the Government as disclosed in their secret and confidential correspondence. No portion of this correspondence is more instructive than that which relates to the early period of the Viceroyalty of Westmorland. It shows with great clearness the opposition between the views of the Ministers in London, and those of the Ministers in Dublin.

In October 1791, when Richard Burke had not yet arrived in Ireland, Lord Grenville wrote to Westmorland that he had been speaking with Hobart and with Parnell, on the subject of the Irish Catholics. He does not announce any conclusion, and writes with evident perplexity, but it is easy to detect the current of his thoughts. 'I am very sensible,' he writes, 'how imperfect my ideas are likely to be on a subject on which so much more local and personal knowledge than I possess are required, in order to enable anyone to form a correct judgment. But I cannot help feeling a very great anxiety that such measures may be taken, as may effectually counteract the union between the Catholics and Dissenters at which the latter are evidently aiming. I may be a false prophet, but there is no evil that I would not prophesy if that union takes place in the present moment, and on the principles on which it is endeavoured to bring it about.'[1]

During several months, the English Government had been receiving from Lord Westmorland alarming accounts of the incendiary papers that were being circulated in Ireland; of the renewed activity of the Catholic question, and especially of the determined efforts to unite the questions of Catholic Eman-

[1] Grenville to Westmorland, Oct. 20, 1791. *Westmorland Papers.* Many of the letters of 1791 and 1792, cited in the following pages, are not in the Record Office. They come from a very valuable and interesting collection of papers of Lord Westmorland, which was kindly lent me by the owner, Sir S. Ponsonby Fane. They have since been given by him to the State Paper Office in Dublin, where they now are.

cipation and parliamentary reform, and to combine in a single league the Northern Dissenters with the Catholics. At length on December 26, 1791, Dundas wrote to Westmorland two very remarkable letters—one of them intended to be laid before the Irish Council, and the other strictly confidential—conveying the policy of the English Government. In the former letter he began by expressing the great concern with which the Government had observed the recent attempts to associate together persons of different religious denominations in Ireland for seditious purposes, and his hopes that the Catholics would repudiate all attempts to seduce them from that 'quiet and regular demeanour,' to which past favours were due, and from which alone future indulgences might be justly expected. At the same time he announced the opinion of the confidential servants of the King, that 'it is essentially necessary, as well on grounds of justice as of sound policy, to give a favourable ear to the fair claims of the Catholics of Ireland,' and he directed the Lord-Lieutenant to use 'his best endeavours to obtain a consideration of this subject divested of the prejudices arising from former animosities, the original grounds of which seem no longer to exist.' 'The Roman Catholics,' he adds, 'form the great body of the inhabitants of the kingdom of Ireland, and as such are entitled to the communication of all such advantages as can be given them without danger to the existing establishments and to the general interests of the Empire.' Their conduct for a long series of years, as well as the interest which they have acquired in property, make it very unlikely that they would 'act on those principles on which their original exclusion was founded. It is, therefore, well worthy of serious consideration how far it is wise for those who look forward to the preservation of the present frame of the Irish Government, to run the risk of exciting a dangerous antipathy against that frame of Government in the minds of the great body of the people, who by the present laws are secluded from . . . any right to vote even in the election of representatives for counties.' The newly acquired importance and independence of the Irish Parliament makes this exclusion especially galling, and in the opinion of the English Ministers it is much more dangerous to the Protestant interest than such 'a moderate and qualified

participation' in the right of election as would give them a stake in the political prosperity of the country.

At the same time, while very powerfully urging the arguments in defence of this position, Dundas does not impose it on the confidential servants of the Crown in Ireland 'in the shape of a decision.' It is the genuine opinion of the English Ministers. It is an opinion they greatly wish to see adopted by the Irish Protestants, but if 'the sentiments of the leading descriptions of persons in the Irish Parliament should be decidedly adverse to this proposal at present,' he insists only that 'at least the door should not be understood to be finally shut against the Catholics, if hereafter men's minds should become reconciled to the extension of further privileges, and if *their* conduct should afford fresh ground for thinking that such privileges may be given with safety.' In order to secure Ireland against dangerous and desperate commotions, it is necessary that the Catholics should be fully convinced that any attempts to carry their objects by force or intimidation will be resisted to the utmost, and that peaceful and dutiful conduct will be rewarded by a continuous though gradual improvement of their situation.

This, then, was the position of the English Government on the question of conferring the franchise on the Catholics. But whatever resolution might be adopted on this question at Dublin, the Lord-Lieutenant is directed to inform the confidential servants of the Crown that it is 'the decided opinion' of the English Government that the Roman Catholics of Ireland have a claim, which neither in justice or policy can be refused, to be at least placed on as favourable a footing as their co-religionists in England. In order to attain this end, the Lord-Lieutenant is directed to review the remaining laws against the Catholics, with the object of recommending to the Irish Parliament the repeal of five classes. It was to be asked to repeal all laws which imposed any special obstruction on the Catholics in the exercise of any profession, trade, or manufacture; which restricted the intermarriage of the members of the two creeds; which interfered with the unlimited power of the Catholic father in the mode or place of education of his children; which made a distinction between Protestant and papist in the use of

arms, and which prevented them from serving either on grand or petty juries.[1]

The official despatch was accompanied by a private and very significant letter, intended for the eye of the Lord-Lieutenant alone. Under ordinary circumstances, wrote Dundas, the Irish Government and Protestant interest have a right to look for the support and protection of Great Britain, but they must not push this expectation too far. 'The public and the Parliament of Great Britain should feel that the object for which their aid is demanded is one in which they are interested, or in which, at least, the Irish Government is founded in justice and policy, in resisting the wishes of the body of the people of Ireland. If it is a mere question whether one description of Irishmen or another are to enjoy a monopoly or pre-eminence,' these conditions will not be fulfilled, and English opinion will not justify the application of English resources for the purpose of keeping the Irish Catholics in a continued state of political proscription. Besides this, the country may soon be at war, and if the Catholic grievances are then unredressed, it is tolerably certain that an attempt will be made to extort by force what is denied as a matter of grace. The example of the volunteers is but too plain, and Catholics had their part in the triumph of 1782. In conclusion Dundas gave it as his decided opinion, 'that there cannot be a permanency in the frame of the Government and Constitution of Ireland unless the Protestants will lay aside their prejudices, forego their exclusive pre-eminence, and gradually open their arms to the Roman Catholics, and put them on the same footing with every other species of Dissenter.'[2]

The policy indicated in these despatches appears to me, in its broad lines, both temperate and wise, but it was received by the Lord-Lieutenant with absolute consternation. The effect of any intimation to the principal servants of the Crown in Ireland that the English Government contemplated it, would in his opinion be most disastrous, would probably prevent them from making any concessions whatever, and would be almost certain to unite them against the Government of Pitt. After some preliminary correspondence, however, with the English

[1] Dundas to Westmorland, Dec. 26, 1791. [2] Ibid.

Government, he brought the chief points before his Privy Council, and on January 14, 1792, he wrote to the Government the result. Those who were present were Fitzgibbon the Chancellor, the Attorney-General, Beresford, the Archbishop of Cashel, the Prime Sergeant, and Sir John Parnell. Of these persons Beresford and the Archbishop of Cashel appeared on the whole averse to any concessions whatever, but in the end there was a general though hesitating and reluctant assent to the wishes of the Government upon the three articles of professions, intermarriage, and education. On the question of juries a reservation was made with reference to grand juries. To admit Catholics into bodies which gave so much consequence and power would be extremely likely to excite the alarm and jealousy of the Protestant gentry, and although such a concession might be abstractly proper, it would be wiser to take no steps till the dispositions of the Irish Parliament had been carefully sounded. The concession of an unlimited right of carrying arms was pronounced to be completely inadmissible. Independently of all religious considerations, it was vitally necessary to the security of the country that the Government should retain the power of disarming the lower classes of the people, who were nearly all Roman Catholics, and exceedingly tumultuous. This was sufficiently proved by 'their numerous insurrections against tithes, the number of forcible possessions, the demolitions of fences which had occurred, their frequent attacks upon revenue officers and escorts, and their numerous rescues of seizures and prisoners.' Every Roman Catholic of decent rank might obtain a licence to carry arms; the law on the subject was never put in force except for the prevention of mischief, and no man could wish to put arms in the hands of the lower class in Ireland, but for the purpose of anarchy and sedition. The situation of the English Catholics was quite different, for they were a very small and highly respectable body, drawn chiefly from the upper and middle classes of society. This point was not 'even mentioned in the application of the Roman Catholics, and the concession would be as much disrelished by the Catholic gentlemen of property as by the Protestants.'

So far, however, the difference between the English and

Irish Governments was not very serious. But the question of the propriety of conceding the suffrage to the Catholics was far more grave. The confidential servants of the Crown not only unanimously pronounced this concession utterly ruinous and impracticable, but they expressed the gravest apprehension and discontent that such a proposal had been so much as considered by the British Cabinet, and an earnest wish that the sentiments of the Ministers should be most carefully concealed. The English proposal, if made to Parliament, and by administration, would occasion such a ferment, both in the House and out of the House, as would totally prevent any of the concessions wished for, and 'it was impossible to foretell to what degree the House of Commons might be affected on the subject, should they imagine such a proposal (and so it would be construed) as an abandonment of the Protestant power, and a sacrifice of it to Catholic claims.'

It was proposed that the suffrage should only be given in the counties, and that the qualification should be higher for Catholics than for Protestants. Such 'a measure of relief was in itself ridiculous and illusory, and would only be deemed the prelude to further demands.' A full concession would necessarily follow. The proposed concession would give the Catholics 'a complete command in the counties, with a few exceptions to northern counties, where the Dissenting interest prevails, and thus put them in possession of the pure and popular part of the representation. By this means they would gradually gain an ascendency, and would soon be enabled to make a successful attack on the tithes and established clergy, so odious to themselves and the Presbyterians, if they should not, indeed, be enabled to go further as their power gradually increased, and with it their hopes and their ambitions;' and the servants of the Crown 'felt and stated their apprehension for the security of the Act of Settlement.' 'I hope,' continued the Lord-Lieutenant, 'what I have thus stated will induce his Majesty's servants in Great Britain entirely to give up all ideas of conceding the elective franchise and the unqualified right of carrying arms, and that I shall receive official information that I may produce, for calming the apprehensions of persons attached to English government and to the connection between the

countries, of their relinquishing these objects. I am fully convinced that no inducement of interest, no plan of intimidation, could in the present temper of the parliamentary mind produce a repeal of the existing laws on these points. . . . There is not one of his Majesty's confidential servants here . . . who does not consider these proposals as equally ruinous to his Majesty's Government and to the Protestant interest, to the connection of the kingdoms and the welfare of the Empire at large.'

Dundas had especially insisted that no language should be employed by the Government intimating that no future concessions should be granted to the Catholics. It is certain, answered Westmorland, that if the right of suffrage should be proposed in the House of Commons from any quarter, it would be impossible to prevent individuals, both in and out of office, from expressing the most decisive declarations.' 'It is a fit subject for your consideration whether the friends of Government ought not to have a liberty of concurring in such declarations, if they should appear indispensable, and that the Government would be otherwise left in a trifling minority.' 'I should not act fairly,' he added, 'if I did not at the same time plainly tell you that the first and natural turn of every mind was for resistance *in limine* and *in toto*. Upon the next attempt at concessions you may be assured a stand will be made. And if the suspicion shall be confirmed (a suspicion too much strengthened by your despatch and the questionable language and situation of Mr. Richard Burke), that the British Government means to take up the Catholics, and to play what is called a Catholic game, and should this suspicion be further corroborated by an instruction in any future session from England to propose the right of suffrage, a stand will be made by the Protestants, without distinction, against the Government, in their own defence. No Administration will be able to conduct his Majesty's business without expressly stipulating a different policy, and his Majesty's Government will be laid at the feet of those aristocratic followings which are at present in hostility to it.'[1]

[1] Jan. 11, 1792, Westmorland to Dundas. In a letter of private instructions to Hobart, suggesting the arguments to be used in England, Westmorland writes, 'It appears to me by no means impossible we shall be seriously asked by formidable bodies of our Parliament, If we concede at your desire, will England pledge herself to support the Protestant power? If we can answer Yes, they will obey: if a negative or

The violent and uncompromising opposition that was declared by the Irish Government to the proposed concession of political rights to the Catholics, naturally alarmed the English Ministers, who had no wish to engage in a campaign from which their servants in Ireland predicted the most dangerous results, and which they represented as certain to be abortive.

Pitt himself, just before the despatch I have last quoted was written, had endeavoured to calm the mind of the Lord-Lieutenant, and attenuate the effects of the despatches of Dundas. He was not at all surprised, he said, that the Lord-Lieutenant should have found it impossible to bring the friends of the Government in Ireland to go 'further than the line of English concession, and in truth,' he added, 'I believe that will keep everything quiet for a time.' The Government had suggested the idea of granting the suffrage, merely because they were persuaded 'that if the Protestants can in good time be reconciled to this idea, the adopting it may lead more than anything else to the permanent support of the present frame of the Government, and that its being suggested now to the principal friends of Government, though it should not be adopted, might bring them gradually to consider it in this light.' At the same time, if they are decidedly against the concession, the Ministers have no wish to press it, but they do think it material 'that no declaration should be made against its being ever done, and that the door should not be considered as shut against such further gradual concession as times and circumstances, and the opinion of the public and Parliament, may hereafter admit. This, accompanied by a firm disposition to resist anything sought by violence, seems to be almost the only security for leading the Catholics to a peaceable behaviour, and for preventing them from joining either now, or if any favourable occasion should arise, with the violent and republican part of the Dissenters.' He fully acknowledged the duty of the English Government to support on all ordinary occasions the Irish Administration, if necessary, by force. All that was meant by the private letter of Dundas was that, if the Catholic question ever produced a

evasive answer is given, they will say, Then let the Protestant interest maintain itself in the way it best can. England has no right to ask us to weaken ourselves by concession, if she intends to abandon us afterwards.' Westmorland to Hobart, Dec. 19, 1791.

serious conflict 'which might require the exertion of almost the whole force of this country, it would hardly be possible to carry the public here to that point, for the sake of the total exclusion of the Catholics from all participation of political rights; that, therefore, the best way of insuring effectual support from hence would be to get, as soon as possible, upon ground more consonant to what we think would be the public feeling.' The Ministers may be mistaken, but they thought it well to suggest this consideration to the Lord-Lieutenant and his advisers. It is, however, mere speculation, and Westmorland need not communicate it unless he thought fit.[1]

Pitt, though not the Minister officially in connection with Lord Westmorland, was so evidently and transcendently the guiding spirit of the Government, that it was tolerably certain that his judgment would ultimately prevail, and on January 18, 1792, Westmorland wrote him a long and extremely frank and confidential letter, reviewing the whole Catholic question in its relation to the general government of Ireland. He began by deploring the very serious alarm which the Government despatch, combined with some other circumstances, had raised. 'I cannot,' he adds, 'exactly satisfy my mind upon what point you look in these speculations; whether you imagine the alteration pressed by an immediate and inevitable necessity, whether as a mode of conciliation to prevent present or approaching tumult, or whether by past observation, the power by which England has governed Ireland having been found defective, you mean to introduce a new alliance as an engine of management.' On the first point he merely observes that 'neither the franchise nor the abolition of distinctions is expected by the Catholics, or pressed by immediate necessity,' though he cannot answer for what may be the effects produced by a knowledge of the sentiments of the English Ministers, and by the suspicious situation and language of Mr. Richard Burke. 'That the concessions would have a tendency to prevent future tumult is against the sentiments of every friend of Government.' It is, indeed, the general belief that their 'increasing power, with their disproportion of numbers, must eventually, either by influence or more probably by force, give the Catholics the upper

[1] Jan. 6, 1792, Pitt to Westmorland.

hand, overturn the Church Establishment first, next proceed to the possession of the State, and the property' which had been obtained through conquest. 'You will observe,' he continues, 'I have written as if it were possible to carry these concessions, but I am convinced you might as well attempt to carry in the English Parliament the abolition of negro slavery, a reform of representation, or an abolition of the House of Lords in the House of Lords, as to carry the Irish Parliament a step towards the franchise. The power of Government against a sentiment prevailing without exception is of no avail. Every man who has regard either to his honour or his interest, would sacrifice his office to his parliamentary or political situation, nor, indeed, would the office be risked, as no successor could be found in such circumstances.' Signs of the growing excitement were plainly visible. Members of Parliament were constantly accosted with the phrase, 'I hope you are a true Protestant and will resist,' and 'The lower Catholics already talk of their ancient family estates.'

The last argument in favour of the enfranchisement of the Catholics, Westmorland examines at greater length, and his words are deserving of a full quotation. 'That the Irish frame of Government,' he wrote, 'like every human institution, has faults is true, but conceiving the object of you and I to be, and which it is only our duty to look to [*sic*], how England can govern Ireland, that is how England can govern a country containing one-half as many inhabitants as herself, and in many respects more advantageously situated, I hold the task not to be easy, but that the present frame of Irish Government (which every man here believes shook by these speculations) is particularly well calculated for our purpose. That frame is a Protestant garrison (in the words of Mr. Burke), in possession of the land, magistracy, and power of the country; holding that property under the tenure of British power and supremacy, and ready at every instant to crush the rising of the conquered. If under various circumstances their generals should go a little refractory, do you lessen your difficulties or facilitate the means of governing, by dissolving their authority and trusting to your popularity and good opinion with the common soldiers of the conquered? Allegory apart, do you conceive England can

govern Ireland by the popularity of the Government? . . . Is not the very essence of your Imperial policy to prevent the interest of Ireland clashing and interfering with the interest of England? You know how difficult it is in England to persuade the popular mind that the Government is acting for the public interest; how can you expect to succeed in Ireland, where practice and appearance must at all times be so plainly against you? . . . Don't tell me that the external power of England could keep her in subjection, or that her interest would keep her in the same link [*sic*]. Much weaker States than Ireland exist in the neighbourhood of mighty kingdoms, and States very often are actuated by other views than their real interest. Reflect what Ireland would be in opposition to England, and you will see the necessity of some very strong interior power or management that will render Ireland subservient to the general orders of the Empire. You know the advantages you reap from Ireland; from what I have stated they may be more negative than positive. In return does she cost you one farthing (except the linen monopoly)? Do you employ a soldier on her account she does not pay, or a single ship more for the protection of the British commerce than if she was at the bottom of the sea? If she was there it might be one thing, but while she exists you must rule her. Count what she would be in opposition. Have you not crushed her in every point that would interfere with British interest or monopoly by means of her Parliament for the last century, till lately? If, as her Government became more open and more attentive to the feelings of the Irish nation, the difficulty of management has increased, is that a reason for opening the Government and making the Parliament more subservient to the feelings of the nation at large? . . . Don't fancy from what I have said that I am averse to cultivating the Catholics, but I cannot understand why a politician should throw away the absolute rule, guidance, and government of an important country to a sect without head or guidance. . . . I am most decidedly of opinion for cultivating the Catholics. I would wish them to look to Government for further indulgence (indeed they can look nowhere else). I would give them every indulgence that is possible to be carried for them that would not revolt the Protestant mind, give offence to the Parliament, and shake the

Establishment in the opinion of the King's servants here. If they differed, we might interfere, but their *universal* sentiment ought not and cannot be disregarded; . . . the risk ought not to be run, in courting them, of oversetting the attachment of the Protestant power by which England ever has, and whilst that power is prevalent always may govern Ireland. Do you mean by the fermentation to force the Protestants to a union? To that point I am not prepared to speak. The Catholics may at times be useful to frighten the aristocracy, but in my honest opinion they are an engine too dangerous for speculation. . . . It is hardly necessary, I should add, that the attempt of the franchise and the abolition of distinctions is impracticable, and ruinous in the attempt. The Protestant mind is so united for resistance that I see no danger but from the opinions of the British Cabinet.'[1]

The arguments of Westmorland were very powerfully supported by his Chief Secretary. Richard Burke, he said, by persuading the Catholics that the English Government was no longer prepared to uphold Protestant ascendency, had proved himself the most dangerous incendiary the Irish Administration had ever contended with. Several leading Catholics had already said, how can we be expected to desist from pressing for the suffrage when 'it is thrown at our heads by the Ministers of England?' 'Be assured, my dear sir,' continued Hobart, 'that you are on the eve of being driven to declare for the Protestants or Catholics. . . . If you suppose that the Protestants will yield without a struggle, you may be assured that you are misinformed. If you think that Mr. Burke's Catholic party will desist so long as he can persuade them to believe that they are abetted by England, you will find yourself greatly deceived. . . . The connection between England and Ireland rests absolutely upon the Protestant ascendency. Abolish distinctions and you create a Catholic superiority. If you are to maintain a Protestant ascendency it must be by substituting influence for numbers. The weight of England in the Protestant scale will at all times turn the balance, but if ever the Catholics are persuaded that the Protestants are not certain of English support, they will instantly think it worth their while

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Jan. 18, 1792.

to hazard a conflict. It may be said, what is it to England whether Catholics or Protestants have the pre-eminence in Ireland? I answer, it is of as much consequence as the connection between the two countries—for on that it depends. Whilst you maintain the Protestant ascendency the ruling powers in Ireland look to England as the foundation of their authority and influence. The Executive Government of both countries must ever (as it always has been) be under the same control. A Catholic Government could maintain itself without the aid of England, and must inevitably produce a separation of the Executive which would speedily be followed by a separation between the countries. . . . Be assured that a conviction of the absolute necessity of maintaining the principle of exclusion from the suffrage is so strong in the minds of people here that it will not be conceded, and you will never have this country quiet till some strong and decided language is held by the British Government upon that point.'[1]

'Nothing,' wrote the Under Secretary Cooke a few days later, 'ought to be done for the Catholics this session at all,' and he described the existing situation as 'the British Ministry and Grattan coinciding in the same measures with different views, the one to strengthen, the other to abolish, English influence; the Irish Ministry in opposition to the English in principle, and with them in acquiescence; the supporters of Government seeing ruin to themselves in standing by Administration.'[2]

Hobart went over to England to enforce the views of the

[1] Hobart to Dundas, Jan. 17, 1792.

[2] Cooke to Barnard, Jan. 21, 1792. I may add a few sentences from the confidential letter which Westmorland wrote to Hobart, when the latter was in England for the purpose of enforcing the views of the Irish Government. 'What has so much discredited the Irish Parliament in England? Examine the history: have they not without exception been the most convenient engines of British management since the days of King William? . . . The object of England must be to govern Ireland. She has in the present Constitution a Parliament formed of such materials that she always has, and probably always will be able to manage it, and she has a sect, deficient in numbers but possessing the property, magistracy, and influence in the country, pledged to maintain that establishment. Can it be for her advantage to alter the system of Government by bringing forward the Catholics, to throw the weight into the scale of the people and render the Parliament unmanageable? . . . No argument should be left to impress Pitt with the impossibility of depending on the Catholics as a body that could be managed for a length of time, and therefore, though every method should be used to attach them, yet we ought not to risk the decisive management at present possessed by England.' Westmorland to Hobart, Dec. 17, 1791.

Irish Administration, and, together with Sir John Parnell, the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer, he had an interview with Pitt and Dundas, which he described in a letter to Westmorland. Dundas reiterated the argument of his private despatch, that if a civil war broke out, it was very doubtful whether the English Parliament would vote a large sum of money to fight a merely Protestant battle. He acknowledged that the easiest way for England to govern Ireland was through the Protestants, but he thought it difficult to predict how long that system could possibly last. Parnell, who, in addition to his high official position, spoke with the authority of a prominent Irish landowner, assured the English statesman that 'there was nothing to fear from the Catholics; that they had always receded when met; that he believed the bulk of them perfectly satisfied, and that there would be no dissatisfaction if the subject had not been written upon, and such infinite pains taken to disturb the minds of the people.' For his own part he was so little afraid, that he gladly laid out all his money on his Irish property, and he believed that nothing made the Catholics at this time formidable, except the idea that they were favoured in England. Pitt doubtfully said that 'they must look to a permanent system,' and he desired personal communication with some of the leading Irishmen to consider how far the present system could be maintained. The extremely anti-Catholic spirit which was raging on the Continent had greatly impressed him, and had led him, as it led Burke, into speculations which were curiously characteristic of the time, and signally falsified by the event. 'Dundas and Pitt,' writes Hobart, 'both seemed to assent to an idea which I threw out, of the probability of the present system in Ireland continuing as long as the system of Popery, which every hour was losing ground, and which once annihilated, put an end to the question.' 'I trust I may add,' Hobart says in concluding the relation, 'that all idea of a Catholic game (if such ever was entertained) is at an end, and that the British Government will decidedly support the Protestant ascendency; which opinion seemed to have been Pitt's from the beginning, and Dundas's ultimately.'[1]

The Irish Government in this conflict with the English

[1] Hobart to Westmorland, Jan. 25, 1792.

Ministers was almost completely successful. The proposal to extend the franchise, and the proposal to extend the use of arms to the Catholics; were both abandoned, and in spite of a strong remonstrance from Dundas,[1] it was determined not to mention the Catholics in the speech from the throne. 'Not only members of Parliament,' wrote Westmorland, 'but almost every Protestant in the kingdom was under such alarm that it was not possible to foresee what effect a recommendation of concessions to the Catholics from the throne might produce.' A report was prevalent, and much credited, that Mr. Richard Burke, who had held various communications with the English Ministers as the avowed agent of the Roman Catholics, had 'received assurances from the British Government of their favourable disposition to abolish by degrees all distinctions between papist and Protestant; and that he had assured the Roman Catholic Committee they could not fail to obtain the right of suffrage if they would be firm.' To mention the subject in the speech from the throne would, the Lord-Lieutenant declared, deprive the Government of some of its most devoted adherents, 'who had never swerved from supporting the English connection and Government, but who thought that danger to that very connection and Government attended even the smallest concession under the present circumstances.'

The alarm, he says, was of the strongest kind. A great meeting of the friends of the Government was only calmed when the Chancellor acquainted them that the Government were determined to resist the demand for arms and franchise. An address in favour of Protestant ascendency was voted by the Corporation of Dublin, and was likely to be re-echoed by every corporate town in the kingdom. 'The general language is still for resistance *in limine* and *in toto*, except among the friends of Administration, who have sacrificed their private judgments to the wishes of the British Government. . . . I am fully persuaded that if they believed there was an intention of going further, all their disposition to concession would be entirely at an end.' It was quite necessary, Westmorland urged, 'to calm the minds of Protestant gentlemen by official assurances

[1] Dundas to Westmorland, Jan. 16, 1792.

from his Majesty's Ministers in Great Britain that they have no intention at all, of pressing future concessions,' and also by an official contradiction of the language said to have been used by Mr. Burke. If gentlemen are not satisfied on these points, 'it will not be possible to prevent declarations against future concessions, or, as you term it, to shut the door against the Catholics.' This policy Westmorland considered not only necessary but safe, and he had no belief in an alliance of the Catholics with the Dissenters. The great body of the Dissenters appeared to him hostile to the Catholic views. The principal Catholic landowners were separated from the Committee in Dublin, and only a decisive declaration of the Ministers against future concessions was needed to restore the confidence which had been lost.[1]

The English Government yielded with little modification to the desires of their representatives in Ireland. Pitt wrote to Westmorland with an evident wish to allay the storm, though conveying no less evidently that if the Irish politicians would accept a more liberal policy they would be fully supported by England. He was perfectly satisfied, he said, with the points of relief to the Catholics, to which the friends of the Government in Ireland seemed disposed to agree; but he regrets to gather from the despatches of Westmorland, and from other circumstances, that there is an impression in Ireland that the English Ministers are influenced by some feeling of resentment towards the Protestant interest in Ireland, or by suggestions of Edmund Burke, arising from his supposed partiality to the Catholic persuasion. These suspicions are totally unfounded. No desire of subverting the Protestant interest ever entered into their minds, and they had never had 'a syllable of communication' with the elder Burke on the subject. 'The idea of our wishing to play what you call a *Catholic game* is really extravagant. We have thought only of what was the most likely plan to

[1] Westmorland to Dundas, Jan. 21, 1792. Three days later Westmorland wrote: 'The Protestant flame in this country grows hotter and hotter, and our difficulties increase. I am very much afraid we shall not be able to carry the smallest concession.' (To Dundas, Jan. 24.) On Feb. 12 he wrote to the same correspondent 'Though the Parliament and public may be reconciled to our Bill, the determination not to grant anything further, and to publish a declaration at no time to grant the franchise, is so violent and so absurd, that I fear it will not be possible to prevent a declaration of this nature in some shape or other.'

preserve the security and tranquillity of a British and Protestant interest. . . . Our communications with Mr. R. Burke you must know from Hobart. . . . His intemperance is, I am afraid, likely enough to do harm to any cause. In the present situation I am so far from wishing you to go further than you propose, that I really think it would be unwise to attempt it. . . . My opinion will never be for bringing forward any concession, beyond what the public mind and the opinion of those who are the supporters of British Government on its present establishment are reconciled to. I may have my own opinion as to expediency, but I am inclined myself to follow theirs, not to attempt to force it.' On one point, however, Pitt stood firm against the wishes of the Irish Government. 'Any pledge, however, against anything more in future, seems to me to be in every view useless and dangerous; and it is what on such a question no prudent Government can concur in. I say nothing on the idea of resisting all concession, because I am in hopes there is no danger of that line being taken. If it were, I should really think it the most *fatal measure that could be contrived, for the destruction ultimately of every object we wish to preserve.*'[1]

Dundas, whose letters appear to me to show a stronger and more earnest interest in Irish affairs than those of Pitt, wrote in the same sense. 'He regretted,' he said, 'the agitations which had been produced in Ireland;' but added, 'As British Ministers we could not give it as our opinion that the Parliament of Ireland ought to give less under the present circumstances to the Catholics of Ireland, than the British Parliament had given to the Catholics of England, not considering these concessions as involving in them anything that could be dangerous to Ireland;' but the English Ministers had no wish to recommend any concessions, if all the King's servants in Ireland object to them. 'We have recommended them because it is in our opinion impolitic to deny them, but beyond the wishing success to an opinion which we entertain, we can have no other bias, and certainly can have no interest separate from that of Ireland.' He insists only that the Irish Government must not 'tie up its future conduct' by declarations on the Catholic question. As far as the franchise was concerned,

[1] Pitt to Westmorland, Jan. 29, 1792.

English Ministers had never done more than suggest to the Irish Protestants the propriety of considering it. 'There is not a wish expressed on our part, that they should go one step beyond the dictates of their own judgment.' In a second letter, written on the same day, and intended for the eye of Westmorland alone, he added: 'The Ministers have some reason to complain of the spirit and temper which have manifested themselves in the deliberations of your friends in Ireland on this business. If they had stated any disposition, at the beginning of it, that we should not communicate with them upon it, we certainly could not have entertained a wish to do so, but should have been extremely well pleased to leave the discussion and decision of it to themselves. But during the whole course of the summer and autumn they have, in various ways, conveyed to us an apprehension of a union between the Catholics and Dissenters which they considered, and justly considered, as fatal to the present frame of Irish Government. Under these circumstances our opinions were expected. We accordingly gave that opinion, but without any disposition to press the adoption. . . . It is impossible to fathom by the utmost stretch of ingenuity what motive or interest we could have, either to entertain or give an opinion, except what was dictated by an anxious concern for the security of the Irish Establishment, and whether our opinions are right or wrong, time only can determine.'[1]

In reviewing the correspondence from which I have so largely quoted, the reader will, I think, be struck with the eminently moderate and liberal views of the English Government, nor can that Government, in my opinion, be justly blamed for abandoning its first scheme of extending in 1792 the suffrage to Catholics. Personally, Pitt knew very little about Ireland, and Ministers are always obliged to rely chiefly on their confidential servants for their knowledge of the situation. If it was impossible at this time to carry the extension of the franchise to the Catholics, or if it could only have been carried at the expense of a great social and political convulsion, and a serious alienation of the Protestants, the Ministers were quite right in abandoning it. It was, however, always maintained by Grattan, Burke, and the other leading advocates of the Catholics,

[1] Dundas to Westmorland, Jan. 29, 1792.

that the representations of Irish Protestant opinion sent over to England were either absolutely false, or at least enormously overstated. The Chancellor and a small group of great noblemen and prelates, who formed the chief advisers of the Lord-Lieutenant, were violently hostile to Catholic enfranchisement; they saw in it the subversion of their own ascendency, and they had therefore the strongest motives to exaggerate its difficulties. 'We hear from all hands,' wrote Burke in January 1792, 'that the Castle has omitted nothing to break that line of policy, which Government has pursued, as opportunity offered, from the beginning of the present reign—that, I mean, of wearing out the vestiges of conquest, and settling all descriptions of people on the bottom of our protecting and constitutional system. But by what I learn, the Castle has another system, and considers the outlawry (or what, at least, I look on as such) of the great mass of the people, as an unalterable maxim in the Government of Ireland.'[1] His son declared that the violent party in the House of Commons consisted of not more than 100 men, and that most of these were in office.[2]

The chief members of the Irish Government made it their deliberate object to revive the religious animosities which had so greatly subsided, to raise the standard of Protestant ascendency, and to organise through the country an opposition to concession. How little religious bigotry there had of late been in the great body of the Irish Protestants was clearly shown by the facility with which the Relief Acts of 1778 and 1782 were carried; by the resolutions in favour of the Catholics passed by the volunteers, who more than any other body represented the uninfluenced sentiments of the Protestants of Ireland; by the recent attitude of the Presbyterians and especially of Belfast, which was the centre of the most decided Protestantism. That these sentiments, in spite of the exertions of the Castle, were not yet very materially changed appears to me conclusively proved by the fact that the

[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 378.

[2] Ibid. 463. 'Whatever difficulties,' Richard Burke added, 'there may be in carrying a measure of effectual relief for the Catholics on account of the supposed reluctance of the Protestants (which, however, is infinitely exaggerated), those difficulties were, in a great measure, if not altogether, created by the Irish Government . . . by becoming, as it were, the champions of a Protestant interest, and by entering into and inflaming the passions and prejudices of that party. This is the real cause of the opposition the Catholics have had to encounter.' Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 462.

concession of Catholic franchise, which was pronounced utterly impossible in 1792, was carried without the smallest difficulty in 1793, and by the fact that nothing but the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam prevented the admission of Catholics into the Irish Parliament in 1795. There were, no doubt, some independent opponents of great weight. The Speaker was strongly opposed to the Catholic claims, and so was Sir Edward Newenham, who had been prominent among the followers of Flood; but the strength of the Opposition consisted mainly of placemen under the leadership of Fitzgibbon.[1]

Fitzgibbon was the first Irishman to whom Westmorland hinted the intentions of the Government, and he found him opposed to all further concessions to Catholics. The chief borough owners connected with Government agreed with him, and although they could not prevent the introduction of a Relief Bill in 1792, they succeeded in greatly limiting its provisions, and in depriving it of the grace and authority of a Government measure. It was seconded, indeed, by Hobart, but it was introduced by Sir Hercules Langrishe, a private member, though a steady supporter of the Government, and one of the oldest and steadiest friends of the Catholics. It enabled the Catholics to be attorneys, solicitors, notaries, and attorney's clerks, and to practise at the bar, though they could not rise to the position of King's counsel or judge. It repealed the laws prohibiting barristers from marrying Catholics, and solicitors from educating their children as Catholics; the laws of William and Anne directed against the intermarriage of Catholics and Protestants; the obsolete Act against foreign education; and the equally obsolete clause of the Act of 1782, which made the licence of the ordinary necessary for Catholic schools; and finally it removed all restrictions on the number of apprentices permitted to Catholic trade.

The concessions fell far short of the Catholic expectations, but the ascendency spirit which had been evoked, stimulated, and supported by the Administration, now ran very high.[2] A

[1] 'I do not believe there was ever an instance in any country, of such a sacrifice of private judgment to the wishes of his Majesty, as by the Irish Ministers in the present concession.' Westmorland to Dundas (private), Feb. 13, 1792.

[2] Grattan, in 1793, reviewing this period, said: 'The most unfortunate error of our Ministry was their inter-

petition of the Catholics asking for 'some share of the elective franchise,' and a petition of the Protestant United Irishmen of Belfast asking for the repeal of all the anti-Catholic laws, were received at first by the House of Commons, but after they had been laid on the table they were rejected by large majorities. The proceeding was exceedingly unusual and offensive, and it did much to cement the union between the Catholics and the reformers of the North.

The Catholic Committee endeavoured to allay the ferment by publishing a declaration of belief similar to that which had lately been published in England, abjuring some of the more obnoxious tenets ascribed to them, and corroborated by opinions of foreign universities;[1] and they also published in February 1792 a remarkable address to the Protestants denying formally that their application for relief extended to 'unlimited and total emancipation,' and that their applications had ever been made in a tone of menace. They asked only, they said, for admission to the profession and practice of the law; for capacity to serve as county magistrates; for a right to be summoned and to serve on grand and petty juries, and for a very small share of the county franchise. They desired that a Catholic should be allowed to vote for a Protestant county member, but only if in addition to the forty-shilling freehold, which was the qualification of the Protestant voter, he rented or cultivated a farm of the value of twenty pounds a year, or possessed a freehold of that value.[2] Under these conditions the Catholic voters would be a small minority in the counties, while they were absolutely excluded from the boroughs. The demand for a limited county franchise was not a mere question of power or politics. The disfranchisement of the Catholic farmers, it was said, was a most serious practical grievance, for in the keen competition for political power which had arisen since the Octennial Bill, and still more

ference with grand juries against the Catholics. . . . They took the lead in fomenting a religious war; they began it; they acted in the mongrel capacity of country gentlemen and Ministers. They acted against the Catholics as country gentlemen, and encouraged the Protestants as Ministers. They had, I understand, informed the British Ministry that the influence of the Crown could not induce a majority to vote against the Catholic pretensions, and then they themselves took a leading part to make the difficulty in the country, which they complained of in their despatches.' *Irish Parl. Deb.* xiii. 10.

[1] See vol. v. 185, 186; Plowden, ii. (appendix) 179–181.

[2] See Grattan's *Life*, iv. 54, 55.

since the Declaration of Independence, landlords in letting their farms constantly gave a preference to tenants who could support their interest at the hustings. Catholic leaseholders at the termination of their leases were continually ejected in order to make room for voters, or they were compelled to purchase the renewal of their leases on exorbitant terms.[1]

The Committee strongly protested against the notion that the property, respectability, and loyalty of the Catholics were on the side of Lord Kenmare and the seceders. All the great mercantile fortunes were with the Committee, and it was one of the results of the penal laws that the wealth of the Catholics was mainly mercantile. The property, they said, of those who signed the resolutions of the Committee certainly amounted to ten millions, and was probably more near to twenty millions. Even in landed property the party of the Committee claimed to possess the larger aggregate, though the aristocracy and the largest single estates were on the side of the seceders. They at the same time asserted their loyalty in the strongest terms, and they denied that any principle of sedition lurked among the Catholics in any corner of Ireland.

They took another step which marks the rapid growth of independence in the Catholic body. They issued a circular letter inviting the Catholics in every parish in Ireland to choose electors, who, in their turn, were in every county to choose delegates to the Catholic Committee in Dublin, in order to assist in procuring 'the elective franchise, and an equal participation in the benefits of trial by jury.' This step was evidently imitated from the Conventions of Dungannon, but nothing of the kind had ever appeared, or, indeed, been possible among the Irish Catholics since the era of the penal laws began. The Catholic prelates were much opposed to it,[2] and its legality was at first questioned, but the opinions of two eminent counsel in its favour were obtained and circulated. It excited, however, the greatest alarm in the circle of the Government, and the grand juries in most of the counties of Ireland passed resolutions strongly censuring it. Some meetings of Protestant freeholders followed the example, and the Corporation of Dublin repudiated

[1] Plowden, ii. (appendix) 209, 210, 218

[2] Macnevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 27; Tone's *Memoirs*, i. 65.

in the strongest terms the policy of their member Grattan, and declared that 'the Protestants of Ireland would not be compelled *by any authority whatever* to abandon that political situation which their forefathers won with their swords, and which is therefore their birthright.' They defined the Protestant ascendency which they pledged themselves to maintain as 'a Protestant King of Ireland, a Protestant Parliament, a Protestant hierarchy, Protestant electors and Government, the benches of justice, the army and the revenue through all their branches and details Protestant; and this system supported by a connection with the Protestant realm of England.'[1]

It is, I think, undoubtedly true, that a wave of genuine alarm and opposition to concession at this time passed over a great part of Protestant Ireland. The democratic character the Catholic question had assumed; the attempts of the northern Dissenters to unite with the Catholics on the principles of the French Revolution; the well-founded belief that some of the new Catholic leaders were in sympathy and correspondence with the democratic leaders; the incendiary newspapers and broadsides which were widely circulated, urging the Catholics to rest content with nothing short of the possession of the State; the outrages of the Defenders to which a more or less political significance was attached, and finally the great dread of innovation which the French Revolution had everywhere produced in the possessors of power, influenced many minds.[2] At the same time the significance to be attached to the resolutions of the grand juries may be easily overrated. As I have already remarked, those bodies in the eighteenth century were very different from what they are in the present day. They were then constituted on the narrowest principles. They were notorious for their jobbing and for most of the vices that spring from monopoly,

[1] Macnevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 29.

[2] Thus Burke, writing in Sept. 1792, mentions that Grattan and Hutchinson had both been visiting him. 'They say that the ascendants are as hot as fire, and that they who think like them are in a manner obliged to decline all society.' Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 530. Westmorland wrote to Pitt, Feb. 24, 1792: 'Grattan has completely ruined himself for some time, in the opinion of the House of Commons as well as all the Protestants of the country. We reap the benefit of his indiscretion, and if Mr. Grattan continues this theme, I almost flatter myself the support of English Government will become popular in the country.' See, too, Grattan's *Life*, iv. 62.

and they had, therefore, every reason to dread any measure which would infuse into them a new and more popular element. They were also to a very unusual extent under the influence of a few great territorial families connected with the Government and susceptible to Government inspiration. The word had evidently gone forth from the Castle that this machine was to be set in motion against the Catholics. The grand jury of Limerick acted under the immediate influence of the Chancellor, and that of the county of Louth under the influence of the Speaker, and these appear to have chiefly led the movement. It must be added, too, that although at least fifteen grand juries joined in the protest, there were several which refused to do so; that in Mayo ten dissentient jurors protested against the resolution of the majority; and that while some of the grand juries accused the Catholics of endeavouring to overawe the Legislature and subvert the connection, and expressed themselves hostile to all concessions of political power, others contented themselves with describing the Convention as inexpedient, and breathed a spirit of marked conciliation towards the Catholics.

A few sentences from a paper drawn up by Richard Burke, towards the close of 1792, show his estimate of the movement. 'The Irish Government,' he says, 'gave me plainly to understand that they had come to an unalterable determination that the Catholics should not enjoy any share in the constitutional privileges, either now or at any future time.' They soon began 'to set up the Protestant against the Catholic interest, and to exasperate and provoke it by the revival of every sort of animosity, jealousy, and alarm. . . . Addresses were carried about by the known connections and dependants of the Castle from parish to parish, to obtain the signatures of the lowest of the people, and even marks of those who could not write. . . . The Irish Ministers endeavoured to inflame the Protestants against the Catholics, by an accusation which they knew to be false and believed to be impossible, viz. a supposed junction with factious persons of other descriptions, for the purpose of destroying the Church and State, and introducing a pure democracy. . . . Newspapers and publications paid for by, and written under the sanction of the Castle, were filled with the vilest scurrility

against their persons and characters. Every calumny which bigotry and civil war had engendered in former ages was studiously revived. . . . Every man, nearly in proportion to his connection with or dependence upon the Castle (and few of any other sort) expressed the most bitter, I may say bloody, animosities against the Catholics. This temper was nowhere discouraged. An address was procured from the Corporation of Dublin, absolute creatures of the Castle, the purport of which was to perpetuate the disfranchisement of the Catholics. It was carried up with the most ostentatious and offensive parade to the Castle (where an entertainment was prepared for the addressers), through the streets of Dublin, a city in which three-fourths of the people are Catholics. . . . No ministerial member spoke during the whole session without throwing some aspersion either on the cause or on the persons. . . . None but ministerial persons, except Mr. Sheridan, showed any disrespect or virulence to the Catholics.'[1]

The debates on the question in Parliament extended to great length, and are exceedingly instructive. Several members urged with much force the absolute necessity to the well-being of the country, of gradually putting an end to the system according to which theological opinions formed the line of political division and the ground of political proscription. From the long period which had elapsed since the confiscations; from the extinction or expatriation of most of the descendants of the old proprietors; from the uniform loyalty shown by the Catholics during the past century, and from the great quantity of Catholic money which had been accumulated, and invested directly or indirectly in land, they inferred that it could be neither the wish nor the interest of the Catholics to shake the settled arrangements of property. They acknowledged that a new and democratic spirit had arisen in Ireland, and that very dangerous doctrines had been propounded among the Presbyterians of the North, but they contended that the Catholics were still untouched. The complete absence of political disaffection among them, which appears so strange, and at first sight so incredible, to those who are aware of the profound and virulent hostility to England which now animates the great body of their descendants, was

[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 100–105.

again and again asserted. They had remained, it was said, perfectly passive during two Jacobite rebellions, and during five foreign wars, and Hely Hutchinson emphatically declared that, though he had been in the confidence of successive Irish Governments for no less than fifty years, he had never heard of any Catholic rising or intended rising of a political nature.[1] In Ireland, as in all other countries, the Catholic gentry and priesthood looked with horror on the French Revolution, and nothing but a belief that political enfranchisement was only to be obtained by the assistance of the revolutionary party, was ever likely to throw a population of devout Catholics into its arms.

The Catholic question, however, was not, it was said, one that could be safely adjourned. Hitherto, the Presbyterian propagandism had been ineffectual, but who could tell how long it would continue so? England was now at peace, but she would probably soon be at war, and Ireland was likely to require all the energies of a united people to defend herself against invasion. A long-continued resistance would inevitably band the people into hostile camps, and revive those religious animosities which had formerly proved so calamitous. A habit of jealously scrutinising the relations of governors to the governed had since the French Revolution become the characteristic disposition of the time, and the American contest had established a doctrine about the connection between taxation and representation, which was glaringly inconsistent with the present position of the Catholics. If the question remained long unsettled, argued one member,[2] with a remarkable prescience, it might some day to the infinite disadvantage of Ireland become an English party question, bandied to and fro according to English party interests. The extension of the franchise was the natural continuation of the policy of 1778 and 1782, and it was a policy which was amply justified by experience. It was the religious animosities, divisions, and incapacities that followed the Revolution that reduced the Irish Parliament to complete impotence, and rendered possible the destruction of Irish commerce. It was the subsidence of those animosities that led to the recovery of commercial freedom, and the acquisition of the Constitution of 1782. Without the co-operation of the two great sections of

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xiii. 256, 257.

[2] Forbes.

the Irish people, it was very doubtful whether that Constitution could be maintained, almost impossible that the gross abuses of the representative body could be removed. The fear of the Pretender, which was the original cause of the disfranchisement of the Catholics, had wholly passed, and the alarms for Protestant ascendency were greatly exaggerated. Political power, it was said, belongs naturally to the educated and wealthier classes of a nation; under the British Constitution it lies mainly with the possessors of landed property. Protestant ascendency rested on the fact that the land of Ireland belonged chiefly to Protestants; on the overwhelming weight which the English connection gave to Protestantism; on the coronation oath, which established the perpetuity of the Church. Considering the manner in which property was held in Ireland, the limited participation of the franchise which was demanded was never likely to affect seriously the balance of power. Catholics had actually sat in the Irish Parliament for more than one hundred and sixty years after the Reformation, and they had not been legally deprived of their right of voting at elections till the reign of George I.

Nor was popery any longer what it had been. Like Pitt and Burke, the Irish legislators believed that the intellectual and political influences which culminated in the French Revolution were leading to its complete and speedy transformation. Grattan, especially, urged that in the present state of belief, men do not act politically in religious combinations, and that where it appears to be otherwise, it is not the religion, but the disability, which unites them. 'The spirit of the Catholic religion,' said Colonel Hutchinson, 'is softened and refined, . . . the power of the Pope is overthrown in France, tottering in Germany, resisted in Italy, and formidable nowhere. . . . The Catholics will forget to be bigots as soon as the Protestants shall cease to be persecutors.' 'The power of the Pope,' said Grattan, 'is extinct. The sting of the Catholic faith is drawn.' 'If popery should go down for twenty years more,' said Day, 'as it did the last twenty years, there would remain little difference between papists and Protestants but in name.' 'The old dangers of popery,' said Langrishe, 'which used to alarm you, are now to all intents and purposes extinct, and new dangers have arisen in the world against which the Catholics are your best and natural allies.'

The persuasion that the introduction of the Catholics would lead to the overthrow of an oligarchical monopoly, which most powerfully influenced the governing interests, was not one that could be easily produced in debate, but the opponents of the Catholic franchise contended with the same arguments as those we have seen in the letters of Westmorland, that in a country where the great majority of the people are Catholics, the enfranchisement of the Catholics would necessarily lead in time to the destruction of the whole system of Protestant ascendency in Church and State, perhaps to a disturbance of landed property as it existed since the Revolution, most probably either to a legislative union with Great Britain or to a total separation from her. It was idle, it was said, to suppose that a Protestant superstructure could be permanently maintained on a Catholic basis. If the franchise was conceded, it must sooner or later be conceded on the same terms as to Protestants, and this would immediately make it in the counties completely democratic. In England land was usually let on short leases, and the number of county electors was supposed to be hardly more than one hundred thousand. In Ireland almost all lands were let on leases for lives, so that almost every peasant has a freehold tenure, and, if not disqualified by religion, a right to vote.[1] The introduction into the Constitution of innumerable forty-shilling freeholders of the most ignorant character, would at once change all the conditions of Irish political life, would enormously increase the corruption and lower the intelligence of the constituencies, and would also greatly endanger the stability of property. The Protestants are superior in property, the Catholics are superior in numbers, and the Catholics will, therefore, find it their immediate interest to promote such a reform in Parliament as would give the influence to numbers and take it from property.

In general, however, the opponents of Catholic enfranchisement took a lower tone, and in speeches that were singularly free from the passion, violence, and panic which the Lord-Lieutenant represented as so general, they resisted the measure

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xiii. 213. The discussion on extending the franchise to the Catholics, extended over the sessions of 1792 and 1793. Some of the arguments I have quoted were used in the latter session.

merely on grounds of temporary expediency.[1] The Protestant constituencies had not been sufficiently consulted. The Catholic Committee consisted of men who had little weight or position in the country. Time should be given for the recent measures of concession to produce their mature and natural fruits, and a fuller system of united education should be established before Catholics were entrusted with political power. Ponsonby, who on the question of Catholic suffrage at this time separated himself from Grattan, dwelt strongly on this point, and with Grattan he urged that the united education, which was already carried on by connivance in Trinity College, should be legalised and encouraged, and that some of the professorships as well as the degrees should be thrown open to Catholics. It was noticed that the junior fellows were in general favourable, and the senior fellows opposed, to the encouragement of united education in the University.[2] On the whole Browne, who was the representative of the University, thought university opinion in favour of this concession, but argued that time should be given to gather its decisions. A motion in favour of granting degrees to Catholics in Trinity College was, however, brought forward by Knox, but for the present withdrawn.

In the course of the discussion of the Catholic question, the words Legislative Union were more than once pronounced. There were rumours that if the Catholic suffrage was granted, the Protestants in alarm would endeavour to obtain one. Burke mentions the persistence of the report, and while pronouncing his own opinion that a Legislative Union would not be for the mutual advantage of the two kingdoms, he thought that Pitt himself would have no desire to see a large body of Irish members introduced into Westminster.[3] Grattan spoke of the pos-

[1] This fact surprised Westmorland, but did not alter his opinion of the real sentiments of the House. He wrote confidentially to Pitt (Feb. 24, 1792): 'I was much surprised that several in their speeches thought the time might come when the franchise might be granted. With exception to Grattan, Egan and Curran, Hutchinson, and some few, perhaps a dozen, who are either Catholics lately conformed or connected with them, there is not one but would postpone that *ad Græcas Calendas*, for no letter I have written has sufficiently described the obstinacy, bigotry, and jealousy of almost every man upon that subject, and that we should have gone so far without quarrelling with our friends is an instance of luck and, I hope, management, to me quite miraculous.'

[2] *Parl. Deb.* xii. 150, 156, 220, 243; Hobart to Dundas, Feb. 20, 1792.

[3] See Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 65; Letter to Langrishe; *Works*,

sibility of a legislative union being effected by giving the Catholics the prospect of enfranchisement, and at the same time acting on the fears of the Protestants. He regarded such a measure with the most unqualified hostility, and maintained that it would be fraught with the worst consequences not only to Ireland but to the Empire. 'It would be fatal to England, beginning with a false compromise which they might call a union to end in eternal separation, through the progress of two civil wars.'[1] Curran spoke of a possible union with equal apprehension, predicting that it would mean the emigration of every man of consequence from Ireland, a participation of British taxes without British trade, and the extinction of the Irish name as a people.[2]

It is a curious subject of inquiry whether the idea of a legislative union had at this time taken any hold of the mind of Pitt, and this inquiry I am fortunately able to answer. Replying to a question in a despatch of Westmorland, which has been already quoted, he wrote: 'The idea of the present fermentation gradually bringing both parties to think of an union with this country has long been in my mind. I hardly dare flatter myself with the hope of its taking place, but I believe it, though itself not easy to be accomplished, to be the only solution for other and greater difficulties. The admission of Catholics to a share of suffrage could not then be dangerous. The Protestant interest in point of power, property, and Church Establishment would be secure, because the decided majority of the supreme Legislature would necessarily be Protestant, and the great ground of argument on the part of the Catholics would be done away, as compared with the rest of the Empire they would become a minority. You will judge when and to whom this idea can be confided. It must certainly require great delicacy and management, but I am heartily glad that it is at least in your thoughts.'[3]

In spite of the fears and predictions of the Lord-Lieutenant,

vi. 364, 365. See, too, a memorial drawn up by Richard Burke, Nov. 4, 1792.

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xii. 168. There is a remarkable passage in Grattan's great speech against the commercial propositions in 1785, showing that he already dreaded such a measure. *Speeches*, i. 240.

[2] *Parl. Deb.* xii. 177, 178.

[3] Pitt to Westmorland, Nov. 18, 1792 (*Westmorland Papers*).

Langrishe's Bill passed through Parliament with scarcely any opposition,[1] and although the Catholic petition for the franchise was rejected by 208 to 23, no pledge against the future extension was given by or required from the Government. Westmorland took great credit to himself, and his letters seem to me to show that he had entirely misread the situation of the country. He assumed that a few great borough owners and officials faithfully and adequately represented the Protestant sentiment, and he believed that the Catholic question had been settled, if not permanently, at least for a number of years. 'I flatter myself,' he wrote, 'this question will be laid at rest for some time, at least until you move the Catholic subject again in England, which I trust you will not do without some consultation.'[2] The position of the Government appeared to him exceedingly strong. The Protestants were satisfied because they believed that the Ministers were determined to uphold the Protestant interest. The Catholics were satisfied, for 'they very well know to Government only are they indebted for the last concessions; the respectable part are extremely grateful.'[3] 'Everything here is most perfectly quiet, and from what I hear, I hope the Catholic Committee, if they are not dissolved, will be quite forgotten.'[4] It was so far from having extorted the recent concessions that nothing would have been granted had not a leading portion of the Catholics seceded from it. The Dissenters appeared to the Lord-Lieutenant 'unquestionably very hostile to the Catholics,' and, except about Belfast and Newry, he had found no trace of disaffection among them.[5] Napper Tandy had been 'completely ruined in the city' by his 'Catholic declarations.' The parliamentary Opposition being 'suspected of Catholicism' was equally discredited, and there was every reason 'to count upon securing the peace and quiet of the country and having a strong Government.' 'The sense of the ruling part of the country,' he continued, 'both in and out of Parliament, is against giving power or franchise to the Catholics; till that opinion changes, any attempt of the Govern-

[1] See Plowden, ii. 362–364.

[2] Westmorland to Pitt, Feb. 24, 1792. See, too, March 3.

[3] Westmorland to Dundas, April 4, 1792.

[4] Westmorland to Pitt, March 3.

[5] Westmorland to Dundas, April 4, 1792.

ment (if the object was desirable, which I doubt *totis manibus*) would be mischievous and fruitless; whenever the temper changes, Government must be attentive to observe that change in time to take advantage of it, and get the credit of whatever may be done for the Catholics; that hour is very distant, and the more so from the late discussion.'[1]

The Catholic question, though the most important, was by no means the only subject which occupied the Irish Parliament in 1792. Much time was expended on the proceedings of Napper Tandy, who, resenting some remarks made by Toler the Solicitor-General, in Parliament, sent that official a challenge, and who when summoned to answer before the House for his contempt, evaded detection and only gave himself up on the day of prorogation, when the power of the House to punish him was at an end. The financial prosperity of the country was made a subject of much remark and congratulation. Parnell, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was able to announce in February, that there was a considerable surplus, and that the revenue of the half-year exceeded that of the last corresponding half-year by 50,000*l.*[2] Grattan argued that the state of the finances was so favourable that it would now be possible to relieve the poorest class of cottagers from the payment of hearth money. The Chancellor of the Exchequer fully admitted the prosperity, and was not unfavourable to the proposal, but he thought it advisable to wait till the unfunded debt accrued in former years was paid off.[3] Another and less pleasing subject which occupied the House during two or three sessions, was the great increase within the last seven years in the consumption of spirits, and the policy was strongly urged of imposing new restrictions on the distilleries and giving additional encouragement to the breweries. In England the right of selling spirits was restricted to inns and taverns, but in Ireland ordinary shops were licensed, and Grattan asserted that nearly every seventh house throughout the country was a whisky shop.[4]

It was in the course of a committee on the spirit regulations

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Feb. 24, April 4, 1792.

[2] Hobart to Dundas, Feb. 9, 1792.

[3] Hobart to Barnard, March 10, 1792.

[4] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xi. 68, 84.

in 1792, that the discussion was interrupted by confused voices on the roof, and the alarm was soon spread that the House was in flames. Every effort to arrest the conflagration proved vain, and in two hours the noble octagon, wainscoted with Irish oak, which had very recently excited the enthusiastic admiration of Wesley, was wholly destroyed. The fire did not extend to the other portions of the building, and the journals of the House were saved, but the picture of the conversion of the King of Cashel, which was the first great work of James Barry, perished in the flames. There were some rumours that the fire was due to a popish plot, but they never appear to have acquired much consistency, and they were completely set at rest by an inquiry which showed it to have been purely accidental. The business of the House proceeded without interruption in another room, which had been fitted up for the reception of the parliamentary records.

An interesting debate was raised in February, by a motion of George Ponsonby for leave 'to bring in a Bill to repeal every law which prohibits a trade from Ireland to the countries lying eastward of the Cape of Good Hope.' The charter of the East India Company was on the eve of expiring, and the occasion appeared favourable for pointing out a disadvantage under which Ireland laboured. By an Irish Revenue Act this Company had been granted a monopoly of the supply of tea to Ireland, and all goods imported by the Company had to be first carried to London. It was said that Ireland expended annually nearly 400,000*l.* in purchasing East Indian goods at a price which was thus artificially enhanced; that the direct trade with China from which Ireland was excluded had become lucrative and important, and that it was partly on account of this restriction that in spite of the marked prosperity of the last few years the whole shipping of Ireland was still, less than a third of that of Liverpool alone. It was urged upon the other hand that the China trade was one in which Ireland was peculiarly unfit to engage, on account of its great distance, and of the fact that the Chinese received only silver in exchange for their tea. An export of silver could not be carried on from Ireland without great injury to the country, and Adam Smith had said that it was good policy for a nation with but small capital, for a time to purchase East Indian goods from other European nations

even at a higher price, rather than by engaging in a direct trade with a distant country to divert a large portion of its capital from employments that are essential to its internal development. The existing system, it was contended, was a peculiarly good one, for it did not injure Ireland while it was an undoubted benefit to England. It was a part of the price which Ireland paid to England for the preference that was accorded to her corn, for the monopoly that was accorded to her linen, for the protection of the Irish coast by the English fleet. The House acted in accordance with these latter arguments, and the motion of Ponsonby was rejected by 156 to 70.

A curious and very flagrant instance of Government corruption was this year brought under the notice of the House of Commons by Browne, the representative of the University of Dublin. The office of Weighmaster for the city of Cork, whose duty it was to weigh butter, hides, and tallow, had been formerly in the gift of the corporation of that city, but had lately been appropriated by the Government, which had divided the office into three parts, and had given all of them to members of Parliament. The incident acquired an unexpected importance when Ponsonby made it the text of a speech reviewing the whole condition of the Irish Parliament, and raising once more within the House that question of parliamentary reform which was rapidly becoming the most pressing and the most important in the eyes of the public. Even before the appointment of the three weighmasters, the country was reminded, there were no less than 110 members of the House of Commons enjoying places and pensions, and while the public revenue of Ireland amounted to 1,600,000*l.* a year, very near one-eighth part of this sum was divided among members of Parliament. Place Bills, Pension Bills, and Responsibility Bills, tending to assimilate the Constitution to that of England, were steadily resisted. Almost every piece of lucrative patronage in the country was bestowed on members of Parliament or on their relations. Peerages were created with a lavishness utterly unknown in England, and they were created mainly with the object of purchasing seats in the House of Commons. The religious denomination which comprised at least three-fourths of

the people was absolutely unrepresented. Not more than eighty-two seats out of the three hundred in the House of Commons were returned by counties or considerable towns. Two-thirds of the representatives in that House were returned by less than one hundred persons. The men who had been most opposed to the Constitution of 1782 were the men who were employed to administer it, and they did so almost avowedly with the purpose of keeping Parliament in complete and habitual subservience to the English Ministers. This was the condition of the Irish Legislature at a time when revolutionary ideas were surging fiercely in the North, and producing a disposition to judge all political institutions by the highest ideal standards.[1]

The form of government, indeed, which had for a long time existed in Ireland only bore a faint and distant resemblance to a representative system. Between 1585 and 1692 there had been intervals amounting altogether to nearly eighty-five years during which no Irish Parliament sat.[2] During nearly two-thirds of the eighteenth century the members of the House of Commons held their seats for the entire reign. The House of Lords was so constituted that it did not possess even a semblance of independence. At one time the bishops, who were appointed directly by the Crown, formed a majority of its active members. At other times the constant stream of ministerial partisans that was poured into it had made all real opposition an impossibility. It was chiefly important in Irish parliamentary history as an assembly of borough owners, and its moral authority was so low, that the restitution of its right of final judicature in 1782 was regarded by some good judges as a most dubious benefit. The anomalies of the borough system were not, as in England, chiefly the result of decay or time, but of innumerable creations under the Stuarts, made for the express purpose of rendering the Legislature completely subservient to the Crown. The same system in a different form had since then been steadily pursued whenever any symptoms of independence appeared. It had been the admission or rather the boast of the man who was now Lord Chancellor of Ireland, that in the contest under Lord Towns-

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xii. 272, 277, 278, 280; xiii. 7, 159–163.
[2] Ibid. xiv. 84.

hend, half a million of money had been expended in purchasing a majority. The declaration of 1782 made the Irish Parliament in theory independent, but it was the first object of the Ministers to regain in influence everything which had been lost in prerogative, and it seemed idle to expect that a Reform Bill could be carried through the two Houses without their concurrence. Flood, as the representative and inspirer of the Volunteer Convention of 1783, had endeavoured by the display of military force to overawe the Government and the Parliament, and through fear of a rebellion to force through, a measure of reform. It was a step, dangerous, unconstitutional, and exceedingly likely to produce a civil war, but it might have been successful. It failed mainly because Grattan and the more moderate reformers refused to support it. The volunteers were induced to dissolve their convention, to lay aside their arms, and to trust to the Government to carry out a measure which was plainly demanded by public opinion, and necessary if the Constitution of 1782 was to become a reality. The result of their forbearance was that the system of corruption was steadily aggravated, and the influence of the Government was steadily exerted in opposition to reform. On the Regency question, it is true, Parliament broke away from ministerial control, but no one seriously believed that it would have done so had it not been supposed that the King was hopelessly incapacitated, and that there was likely to be in consequence a permanent transfer of patronage and power. And no sooner had the Government triumphed than they resolved to render the Parliament even more corrupt and subservient than before, and no less than fourteen parliamentary places were created in a single year. Under the forms of constitutional Government the spirit was thus almost wholly lost, and the property, the intelligence, the opinions of the country had not much more than a casual or precarious influence over legislation.

Many of these facts have been already stated in the present work, but it may not be useless to bring them once more in a connected form before the reader. In speech after speech, and session after session, they were pressed upon the Irish public, with all the force of great eloquence, and with every variety of illustration. 'The British House of Commons,' said Conolly,

'consists of 558 members, only 67 of whom are placemen, and no pensioners can sit in it. The Irish House of Commons consists of 300 members, 110 of whom are placemen or pensioners. They have adopted the whole power of the Privy Council before the repeal of Poynings' Law, and appear determined to let no law pass which is not agreeable to the English Minister.' 'There are about 140 men,' said O'Neil, 'who vote with Administration on every great question. Of these men 110 have places or pensions.' Grattan described the system of Irish Government in 1792 as 'a rank and vile and simple and absolute Government, rendered so by means that make every part of it vicious and abominable; practically and essentially the opposite of the British Constitution.' 'By this trade of Parliament,' he said, 'the King is absolute. His will is signified by both Houses of Parliament, who are now as much an instrument in his hand as a bayonet in the hands of a regiment. Suppose General Washington to ring his bell and order his servants out of livery, to take their seats in Congress—you can apply the instance.' He quoted, with great emphasis, the opinion of Locke, that an attempt of the executive power to corrupt the legislative is a breach of trust, which, if carried into system, is one of the causes of a dissolution of Government, and a sure precursor of great revolutions in the State. 'Such revolutions,' Locke had said, 'happen not upon every misadministration in public affairs. Great mistakes on the ruling part, many wrong and inconvenient laws, and all the slips of human frailty will be borne without mutiny or murmur,' but when a long train of abuses and artifices all tending one way makes the design visible to the people, they will not long be avoided.

Not a single fact in this crushing indictment could be seriously disputed. Much was, however, said of the danger of discrediting existing institutions, and much of the necessity of judging all institutions by their fruits. It was admitted that the Irish parliamentary system was rather a system of nomination than of representation. It was admitted, or, at least, not denied, that little more than a fifth part of the House of Commons was really under popular control, and that an appeal to the people by dissolution was little more than a farce; but it was asserted by the Ministers, and fully acknowledged by the Oppo-

sition, that the country had for some years been steadily and rapidly improving, that many popular and beneficial laws had been enacted, and that some of them were of a kind which would hardly have been expected from a selfish oligarchy. The Irish laws against corruption at elections were very severe.[1] The improved method of trying disputed elections, which was the most valuable of the reforms of Grenville, was almost immediately enacted in Ireland.[2] The Irish Parliament readily followed the example of the English one in divesting its members of nearly all their invidious privileges.[3] 'Since 1779,' said the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 'the Parliament of Ireland has done more for the benefit of the kingdom than all the antecedent Parliaments from the days of Henry VII.,' and 'in this space the country has advanced to a degree of prosperity unhoped for even by the most sanguine.'[4] 'Under the present state of representation,' said the same speaker on another occasion, 'the prosperity of the country has increased as much as it could under any other representation whatsoever, and as to liberty, the English Acts, which were adopted at and since 1782, show that the Irish Parliament was as well inclined to the people in that respect as any Parliament could be, in whatsoever manner it might be chosen.' In how many countries in Europe, it was asked, was civil and personal liberty as fully guaranteed by law as in Ireland? Since the accession of George III. Ireland had obtained the limitation of her Parliament by the Octennial Act, a free trade, the full participation of commercial intercourse with the British colonies in the West Indies and America, security of personal liberty by the Habeas Corpus Act, the benefit of all English treaties, the independence of the Legislature, the independence of the judges, the restoration of the final judicature. The Test Act had been repealed; the validity of Dissenters' marriages had been fully established; by far the greater part of the penal laws against the Catholics had been abolished, and a crowd of useful laws had been made for developing the resources and improving the condition of the people. A Legislature which could point to such a catalogue of measures enacted within

[1] 3 Geo. III. c. 13; 15 & 16 Geo. III. c. 16.

[2] 11 Geo. III. c. 12.

[3] 11 & 12 Geo. III. c. 12.

[4] *Parl. Deb.* xii. 20. See, too, on the great admitted prosperity of the country, pp. 22, 39, 90, 143, 280.

thirty-two years could not be wholly contemptible, and with all its anomalies of representation the Irish House of Commons undoubtedly included a very large proportion of the best ability and knowledge in the community.

There was a time when such a defence would have been as readily acquiesced in by the country as by Parliament. But the French Revolution had raised up a new spirit, and made the government of Ireland, which had long been singularly easy, both difficult and dangerous. The nation had awakened to political life; a fever of agitation and speculation was abroad; and it was already evident to sagacious men that unless speedy measures were taken to reform the abuses of the Irish Parliament, that Parliament would soon lose all power of guiding or controlling the nation.

The combination of the Catholic question with the question of parliamentary reform, while it greatly increased the weight of each, had introduced some new and important divisions into Irish politics. Charlemont and Flood, as we have already seen, had always contended that the exclusion of the Catholics from all political power was essential to the security of Ireland, and they believed that it could be best maintained by carrying out the policy of parliamentary reform. They desired to sweep away the nomination boroughs and to establish the Protestant ascendency upon the basis of a free Parliament, and of an electoral body which, though purely Protestant, would comprise the great preponderance of Irish property, intelligence, and energy. To such politicians recent events were very displeasing, and it is remarkable that Sir Edward Newenham, who had been one of the warmest supporters of Flood, and one of the most ardent reformers of 1783, was now a conspicuous opponent of the enfranchisement of the Catholics and apparently a very lukewarm reformer. Flood had himself just died, but Charlemont, though his influence had greatly dwindled, was still the nominal head of the volunteers, and his letters show clearly the alarm and disgust with which he perceived the present tendencies of Irish politics. To his intimate friend, Halliday, who was a conspicuous reformer and also a conspicuous advocate of the Catholics at Belfast, he wrote on the subject with perfect frankness. 'The Belfast sentiment,' he said, 'is, as you inform me,

that a complete reform is necessary, that without it the excellent regulations proposed by the Whig Club would be of little avail, and that without Catholic assistance such reform may be despaired of. I have already mentioned to you,' he continued, 'though I fear without much avail, the danger which must always attend the calling in to our assistance auxiliaries more numerous than ourselves; but how are those dangers increased when an inveterate feud, excited and embittered by reciprocal injuries, has long had possession of the newly confederated parties whose reconcilement is now, after ages of animosity, suddenly and unaccountably produced by a recent and unnatural alliance. Complete your plans, and Ireland must become a Catholic country, but whether our masters will be as we are, may be matter of doubt, especially as toleration is certainly not the ruling principle of their religion, and as interest may possibly connect itself with principle to produce a contrary effect. There is no arguing from analogy between Ireland and any other country upon the globe, not only on account of the disparity of numbers, but also on account of those never-to-be-forgotten claims, which the slightest insight into human nature is sufficient to convince us will one day or other be made by those who have power to support them. . . . The bare idea that such claims may be made will at once put a stop to all money intercourse with England, and indeed with every other country, a circumstance which must, I think, be fatal to commerce. Who would accept of a mortgage on an estate held under a title disputed by those who are possessed of all power? And here I cannot avoid declaring an opinion on which my fears are in a great measure grounded, that should the plan now in agitation take place, it will necessarily lead to one of two, by me detested, consequences, either to separation or to union.'

Further on he recurs to the same idea in terms which are very remarkable. The prediction that the Goverument were about to bid high for the support of the Catholics, seems to him exceedingly improbable. 'Indeed it is hardly possible that they should comply with demands so very extraordinary, and in which the interests of both countries are so deeply involved, unless it should be with the sinister view of finally compelling the Protestants of Ireland to call for a union, an object they

have undoubtedly much at heart, and which they may reasonably think in a short course of time attainable by these means, though certainly by none other.'[1]

The views of Charlemont, however, were only held by a small minority of reformers. The great majority, both of those who with Grattan wished political power to rest chiefly in the hands of the possessors of landed property, and of those who, like the United Irishmen, would have established a purely democratic constitution, were now the advocates of the Catholics. They maintained that no reform could be adequate, which left the great majority of the people incapacitated on account of their religion; that no reform was probable, or perhaps possible, unless the Catholics united with the Protestants in demanding it. The English Government, on the other hand, were strongly opposed to any measure of parliamentary reform which might destroy or impair their absolute control over the Irish Legislature, and to maintain this authority unbroken was now the main object of their Irish policy. They had, however, no hostility to the Catholics, and were quite willing to give them votes in the counties, if by such a measure they could dissolve an alliance which was exceedingly dangerous to English ascendency, and prevent the spread of revolution and disloyalty. But the Irish Government was fully resolved, if possible, to perpetuate without change the whole existing system of monopoly and abuses. They were determined to resist all forms of parliamentary reform, all reduction of the patronage of the Crown, all attempts to give the Catholics a share of political power. Provided the usual bargains of peerages and pensions were duly made, they still believed that such a policy could be maintained, and when Parliament was prorogued on April 18, 1792, the country appeared to Westmorland essentially quiet, and the Protestant ascendency completely secure. A peerage must be granted to the wife of Sir Henry Cavendish, who, on the promise of a recommendation, had, together with three members who were dependent on him, abandoned the Ponsonby connection in 1791. Another must be given to Mr. Harman, with a remainder to Sir L. Parsons, and in this way a very formidable debater might be muzzled or conciliated. Lord Shannon, who was now sepa-

[1] Charlemont to Halliday, Dec. 13, 1791. *Charlemont Papers.*

rated from the Government, though he was 'a very lukewarm patriot' and very hostile to the Catholics, must be attached, and by these means all serious difficulties would be removed.[1]

The Lord-Lieutenant, however, soon learnt that he had miscalculated the energy of the movement. His letters during the remainder of the year are extremely curious, but they must be read with the same reservations as the letters from which I have already quoted. They were written by a strong opponent of the policy of Catholic enfranchisement, by a governor who was surrounded by, and derived his chief information from, men who were at the head of the anti-Catholic party, and who desired above all things to obtain a decisive English declaration in its favour.

The proposed Catholic convention he thought especially serious. It was intended, among other objects, to intimidate their own gentry and clergy, 'as their clergy, and the Pope himself, are very much intimidated by the agitations of these factious democrats.' The design, he said, was to elect a National Assembly, and such an assembly would be very alarming on religious, but still more on political, grounds. Is it to be supposed that the Catholic Committee, when reinforced by delegates from the whole country, 'would ever give way to so aristocratic a Parliament as the present Irish House of Commons? Every acquisition made through their application, or rather intimidation, would increase their power and influence with their electors, and would eventually produce a total reform of the present Parliament, and how England is to maintain its management of an Irish National Assembly is beyond my ability to conjecture.' It was 'a deep-laid scheme, not only against the religious establishment . . . but against the political frame of the Irish Government, which England has, with very little variation and exception, managed to her own purpose.'[2] Westmorland painted in the strongest colours the Protestant ferment which was shown during the summer by the resolutions of the grand juries and of the county meetings, but he did not inform the Government of the great part which men connected with his Administration took in producing it, nor does he appear to have

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, April 4, 1792.

[2] Westmorland to Dundas, June 7, 1792.

adequately described the amount of public support which the Catholic Committee found. The general condemnation of the sixty-eight seceders by their co-religionists, proved that while the old leaders of the Catholics were still exceedingly conservative, they had lost their power of guiding and restraining. It had been the policy of the penal laws to reduce as much as possible the numbers and influence of the Catholic landlords, and the unexpected but very natural consequence was, that the leadership of the Catholic body was passing into other and much less trustworthy hands. 'The powerful Catholics,' wrote Westmorland, 'however they may wish, as all men do, to get rid of disabilities, would be very sorry to do anything offensive to Government; . . . if they could get rid of violent democrats that manage their concerns, they would be very desirous to be quiet.'[1]

There were, however, no means of preventing the convention. The legal opinions in its favour published by the Committee were unanswered, and Westmorland was obliged reluctantly to confess that, if it confined itself to petitioning, he knew no existing law by which it could be suppressed. Grand juries and public meetings might protest, but they could do little more, and the moral effect of their protests was destroyed by the attitude of the Belfast dissenters, and by the great Catholic meetings which now became common. In Dublin several thousand Catholics were addressed by Keogh, McNevin, and others, and a counter-manifesto was drawn up by Emmet in reply to the manifesto of the Corporation.[2] The opposition of the bishops to the meeting of the convention was at first very decided, but the Catholic Committee at last succeeded in obtaining the co-operation of some of them and the neutrality of the rest.[3] In October twenty-two counties, and most of the cities, had already elected delegates according to the prescribed form, and the other counties in a more irregular way, and instructed them to maintain a guarded language, but to petition for 'the elective franchise and trial by jury.'[4] 'The committee,' wrote Westmorland, 'are attempting, and have to a certain degree

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Oct. 16, 1792.

[2] Wolfe Tone's *Memoirs*, i. 67.

[3] Ibid. i. 86, 87.

[4] Westmorland to Pitt, Oct. 20, 1792.

gained, a power over the people . . . and if the convention should meet, will probably have such influence and authority as will be quite incompatible with the existence of any other Government.'[1] 'The general Catholic Committee,' he wrote a month later, 'have already exercised most of the functions of a Government. They have levied contributions; they have issued orders for the preservation of the peace—a circumstance perhaps more dangerous than if they could direct a breach of it—they maintain the cause of individuals accused of public crimes; their mandates are considered by the lower classes as laws; their correspondences and communications with different parts of the kingdom are rapid, and carried on, not by the post, but by secret channels and agents. If their general Committee have acquired this degree of power, what may not be apprehended from the power of the convention?' Among the lower classes vague, wild hopes were rapidly spreading. They have been told that the elective franchise will put an end to rents and tithes and taxes, and there was an evident change in their demeanour towards Protestants. There were alarming rumours of the purchase of arms, but, except in one or two counties, Westmorland did not believe them to be founded, and a thousand wild stories of conspiracies and intended massacres were floating through the country. Imprudent words, such as, 'We have been down long enough, It will be our turn next,' 'We shall not pay tithes after Christmas,' have been repeated and re-echoed through every part of the kingdom. At the same time the Lord-Lieutenant adds that, though the lower orders of Catholics were often riotous, disorderly, and impatient of regular law, he had not heard of any symptoms of disaffection to their landlords.[2]

The evil, he thought, came chiefly from England, and it was in the power of England to arrest it. 'The present agitation and impertinence of the Catholic body is a general impression . . . that England wished the Catholics to have further indulgence, was indifferent who was uppermost in Ireland, and would not take any part in any dispute that might arise; and I am very much inclined to believe that if they could once under-

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Oct. 20, 1792.
[2] Westmorland to Dundas, Nov. 18; Westmorland to Pitt, Oct. 20, 1792.

stand that English Government was resolved to support the Protestant Parliament and establishment, the serious part of this agitation would end.'[1] Before Richard Burke came over there was no violence amongst the Catholics, and even now a clear intimation of the English sentiments may quiet the country.[2] He had consulted with his confidential servants, and reports that 'hardly anyone thinks the state of the country requires the immediate calling of the Parliament. They seem agreed in resistance, and in the cry that if England would but speak out that she would support the Parliament, the alarming part of the agitation would be at an end.'[3] Fitzgibbon especially, said that Government 'should not yield anything at present,' that 'British Government should speak out plainly their determination' to that effect, that this declaration must be inserted in the next speech from the throne, and that no conciliatory language towards Catholics should be used. If this course was taken, the Chancellor and the other confidential servants were agreed that there was nothing to be feared.[4]

The Irish Government did not believe that there was any serious danger of rebellion from Catholics, and they were for a long time completely sceptical about the possibility of union between Catholics and Dissenters. 'The greater part of the country,' wrote Hobart in November, 'is perfectly quiet.' 'Mr. Keogh and a particular set of the Catholics openly profess their approbation of the levelling system, and exult in the success of the French arms. These men industriously proclaim a junction between the Catholics and the Presbyterians, a junction, however, which only exists between themselves individually and the Dublin and northern republicans, and undoubtedly does not include either the body of the Presbyterians or Catholics.'[5] 'Except a few troublesome spirits in Dublin, perhaps a majority at Belfast,' writes Westmorland, 'the Protestants universally consider the admission of Catholics to political power as dangerous to their property, and as the annihilation of their establishment. . . . I do not think that levelling principles

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Oct. 20, 1792.

[2] Hobart to Barnard; Westmorland to Pitt, Oct. 20, Nov. 3, 19, 1792.

[3] Westmorland to Pitt, Nov. 24, 1792.

[4] Westmorland to Dundas, Nov. 18, 1792.

[5] Hobart to Nepean, Nov. 15.

have yet spread to any dangerous extent.'[1] 'I am convinced the Catholics have made no preparation for insurrection, nor have it at present in contemplation, nor any material connection with the great body of Dissenters.'[2] 'There is certainly a dislike between Protestant and papist every day increasing.'[3] 'It is very extraordinary, but I believe the two sects of Irish hate and fear each other as much as they did one hundred years ago.'[4] A revival of volunteering was much spoken of, and it caused the Lord-Lieutenant much anxiety, but he at first believed that it was mainly a Protestant movement against the Catholics.[5] Belfast, he says, is republican, but so it has been ever since the American War, and the republicans 'are far from agreed respecting Catholic emancipation,' and many of them are most bigoted Protestants.[6] In parts of the counties of Down, Armagh, and Louth, the riots between the Defenders and Peep-o'-Day Boys were constantly raging. 'The lower ranks there have that inveteracy, that they are almost in a state of open war.'[7]

From an English point of view the divisions and ferment in Ireland appeared not altogether an evil. It had always been a leading English object to induce the Irish Parliament to support as large an army as possible, and the present time seemed well fitted for carrying out this object. 'The augmentation of the army is a point that I believe, if the agitation continues, would meet with the universal approbation of the Protestants . . . and I am convinced they would be equally ready to incur any expense that may be rendered necessary.'[8] Another remark, which is certainly not less significant, occurs in a later letter: 'The Protestants frequently declare they will have a union rather than give the franchise to the Catholics; the Catholics that they will have a union rather than submit to their present state of degradation. It is worth turning in your mind how the violence of both parties might be turned on this occasion to the advantage of England.'[9]

[1] Westmorland to Dundas, Nov. 18, 1792.
[2] Westmorland to Pitt, Nov. 19, 1792.
[3] Ibid. Oct. 20, 1792.
[4] Westmorland to Dundas, Sept. 19.
[5] Westmorland to Pitt, Nov. 3, 1792.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid. Nov. 24, 1792.
[8] Ibid. Oct. 20, 1792.
[9] Ibid. Nov. 24, 1792.

On the whole, up to the close of November the situation, though anxious, did not appear to the Lord-Lieutenant seriously alarming. 'If some pains are not taken to prevent it,' he wrote, 'there will be a very general spirit of volunteering with the Protestants . . . owing to the opinion I have so often told you, that the British Government means to desert them. Every intelligence that reaches me respecting the Catholics bears the most pacific appearance. . . . The mind of the people is certainly very much heated by political discussions, and therefore one cannot foretell what may occur out of fortuitous circumstances, but no one fact has yet reached me, that manifested any plan for insurrection from the Catholics. The regular formation of a government, and correspondence with one another, seems to be more alarming and more difficult to counteract.' [1] Reports were persistently sent from England to the effect that arms had been largely imported into Ireland, but these reports after very careful investigation appeared either greatly exaggerated or wholly false. The real disaffection was confined to a few, though there was agitation and alarm over a great area. There had been serious riots at Cork and Bandon on account of the high price of provisions, and for some days the neighbouring country was ravaged by the mob. 'The lovers of mischief have circulated stories that the troops were unwilling to act, but on every occasion they manifested the greatest alacrity.' 'I hope,' continues the Lord-Lieutenant, 'the pretence of famine will not set the country people into a flame. The common consequence of political discussions is to make them dissatisfied with their situation, and to these discussions may probably be in some measure attributed the corn riots in Cork.' [2]

Westmorland now agreed that it would be good policy for the Protestants to hold out to the Catholics hopes of future indulgence, but that the Government should avoid distinctly pledging itself. He promised, as far as he dared, to suggest this at a meeting of the confidential supporters of the Government which was about to take place, 'but so rooted and universal is the sentiment, that admission of the Roman Catholics to political power must overturn the property as well as political importance of the Protestant possessors,' that he almost despairs

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Nov. 24, 1792. [2] Ibid. Nov. 28.

of success. 'The affairs of the Continent have strangely altered this question, but so far they appear to have only strengthened the Protestant determination to resist.'[1]

Though nearly a century has passed since they were written, some of the following remarks appear to me to have much more than a simply historic interest. 'I think Great Britain still may easily manage the Protestants, and the Protestants the Catholics; but this to me is clear, that you cannot support your Government without the confidence of the Protestants; I don't mean as the Catholics would say, the parliamentary monopolists, but I mean the upper class of the country, and that by whatever means you lose that, your command over the country is at an end.'[2] 'It must always be in our recollection that the Protestants hold by Great Britain everything most dear to them, their religion, their pre-eminence, their property, their political power. And surely it is fortunate, whilst levelling doctrines are afloat, to have so large a portion of subjects, including the Parliament, the magistracy and almost all the landed property, attached to British connection and to the British Constitution, and pledged against innovation by their peculiar situation. In consequence of the Roman Catholic agitation and claims, if the hour is not come, it may not be far distant, when you must decide, I fear, whether you will incline to the Protestant or the Catholic, and if such a necessity should arise, it cannot be doubted for a moment that you must take part with the Protestants. The success of Roman Catholic objects must end shortly in the abolition of all religious distinctions, and in a union of those distinctions, which could only be acquiesced in by England upon a well-grounded persuasion that the connection of the Empire would be more insured by it, and that Ireland would then be more easily managed by English Government than by preserving the Protestants in their present situation. If such a union were once formed, and if the Protestants, after being forced into submission to it, should contrary to their expectations find themselves secure of their possessions without British protection, is it not to be feared they might run into the present Statemaking mania of the world, and form a Government more to the taste and wishes of the people than their present aristo-

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Nov. 24, 1792. [2] Ibid. Nov. 19.

cratical Constitution? . . . You must at least expect resentment from the Protestants, and gratitude from so loose a body as the Catholics could not much be relied on.' Even if the Government were to yield what was now demanded they 'would not put an end to the grievance of monopoly, whilst 3,000,000 of people were only to have a small share in the election of 64 members, and 236 were to be returned by a few Protestants.' Nor should it be forgotten that the Catholics themselves were by no means unanimous. 'The Roman Catholic gentry of property, and the higher classes of their clergy, are averse to this violence and the levelling system connected with it, and however anxious for the points in question, they would wish to carry them by peaceable application, and without offence to Government; but the violent attacks and threats of the democratic leaders of the Catholics have forced the clergy into a co-operation with their plan, and the gentry into an acquiescence.'[1]

Since Pitt had intimated that a legislative union was in contemplation, the notion was evidently much in the mind of the Lord-Lieutenant, and the following curious passage shows his wishes and calculations, and especially his strong sense that the measure was only possible if the political division between the two religions in Ireland continued. 'A union,' he writes, 'is certainly at present not looked to or talked of with disapprobation by the leading people; if the Protestants should get over their Catholic prejudices, adieu to that cure for this country; however, I do not think that very likely. I have never formed any scheme in my own mind or had any notion from you of the sort of proportion that might be feasible in legislative [*sic*], or internal or external taxes. Tell me loosely what you think; I may be quietly able to sound the ground a little. The great men dread very much the ruin of themselves and the Establishment in the present agitations, and would therefore not be impracticable. The Catholics would probably not be averse to what put them on the line with the Protestants and opened to them the State; but the city of Dublin would be outrageous, and that description of politician who can cabal and job here, but who would either not reach or be lost in the magnitude of the Court of London. Would you not find great difficulty on

[1] Westmorland to Dundas, Nov. 18, 1792.

your side the water? The admission of the Irish members to the House of Commons must throw considerable weight to the Crown, a very fortunate thing, but would be much argued upon, besides the commercial difficulties we should have to encounter. The subject is full of difficulties, and the most requisite of all is not to let such an idea be suspected, for if it took a wrong turn one cannot tell what mischief it might produce. As it is generally considered here that this Catholic agitation is of English making, the Irish have imagined that English Government would not have raised such a flame but to serve their own purposes. . . . Such is the agitation and alarm at present that it is not possible to say what current the popular opinion may take. I should, I own, be very proud if I should be the manager in such a successful business. Waiting, however, for accidents, and making the most of them, we must for the present get over our present crisis.'[1]

I cannot find any evidence that Pitt responded to these speculations. He was evidently anxious and disquieted, but also perplexed about the course which Irish politics were taking. He expressed much alarm at the prospect of the Catholic Convention, but did little more than throw out suggestions for the consideration of the Irish Government. Might it not be wise to prohibit the import of arms into Ireland; to disarm the papists; to call Parliament together and propose to it an augmentation of the forces? 'Whatever opinions may have been entertained by any of us here, as to the propriety of endeavouring to keep the Catholics quiet by prospect of further and gradual concession, we have never entertained a doubt of the necessity of showing a firm determination to resist every attempt to carry their point by force or intimidation. There seems but too much reason to fear that such is their present design, and indeed the unexpected turn of affairs in France is but too likely to give encouragement to the lovers of disorder in every part of the world.' It is 'an object of the most serious importance not to let Protestant volunteering on any pretence gain ground. Whatever may be its object or effect in the present moment, it must in the end be destructive to the authority of regular government.' Pitt complains that he has

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Nov. 28, 1792.

not sufficient local knowledge to judge the question, but he approves of a suggestion of Westmorland that the creation of a militia might be the best way of checking the spirit of volunteering, and at the same time maintaining the peace of the country.[1]

Some doubts appear to have been again expressed about the willingness of the English Parliament to vote men and money to support the Irish Protestants, if these were confronted by a rebellion because they refused to give votes to the Catholics. Hobart wrote that England had no right to hesitate for a moment: 'If the question now at issue was on the passing of a new law, it would undoubtedly be for the consideration of his Majesty's confidential servants whether to advise his Majesty to withhold or give his consent. But as the case now stands the Irish Parliament are on the defensive, and have an unquestionable right to call on his Majesty to assist them in supporting the Protestant Establishment.' The complete legislative independence of the Irish Parliament had been fully acknowledged in 1782 and 1783, and it was therefore entirely inadmissible that the question of suffrage in Ireland should be discussed in the English Parliament. On all the many occasions in which English policy had involved the Empire in war, the Irish Parliament had loyally assisted England, and if for the first time since the Revolution an armed struggle broke out in Ireland, England must recognise a corresponding obligation. 'The inseparable annexation of the crowns of Great Britain and Ireland so connects the two countries, that the enemies of the one must ever be considered the enemies of the other. In the late Spanish business, when his Majesty was likely to be involved in war, the Irish Parliament cheerfully came forward to support the common cause. No inquiry was made into the policy of the war, or into the interest Ireland might have in the object of dispute. Although it was well known it originated in a question of trade to a territory from the commerce of which Ireland was precluded by a British law, there was no abstract reasoning on the subject. The broad principle of supporting his Majesty against those whom he had thought fit to declare to be his enemies was admitted and acted upon in

[1] Pitt to Westmorland, Oct. 14, Nov. 18, 1792.

Ireland. The difference upon the present question as it bears upon Great Britain appears to be whether those who enter into rebellion against his Majesty are less the enemies of the Empire, than those who dispute a territory on the north-west coast of America.' It is of course open to the English Ministers to ask their friends in Ireland to support their views, but Hobart, knowing the opinions of that class of Irish politicians, was convinced that it would be useless for them to do so. 'I can assure you that an attempt to carry the franchise for the Catholics under the present circumstances would be perfectly nugatory.'[1]

French affairs were now beginning to influence Irish politics as powerfully as American affairs had done ten years before. The passionate enthusiasm which the principles of the Revolution had produced among large classes, rose higher and higher when it became evident that almost all Europe was likely to be involved in the struggle. The insulting manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick, the invasion of French territory and the capture of Verdun, were speedily followed by the check of the Prussians at Valmy, and by the ignominious retreat of the allied army across the Rhine. French soldiers entered Worms, Mentz, and Frankfort: Savoy and Nice were annexed. Royalty in France was abolished, and the triumphant Republic held out the promise of support and brotherhood to every suffering nationality in Europe. In November, the great victory of Jemmapes placed Austrian Flanders at its feet; and before the year had closed, the French power extended to the frontier of Holland. England was now rapidly arming, and it was becoming more and more evident that she would soon be drawn into the war.

The effects of these events in Ireland were soon felt. The new spirit of volunteering which the Lord-Lieutenant had deplored, and which he still ascribed chiefly to the Protestant dread of the Catholics, continued to increase, and it was evident that it was assuming a republican form. In July, a great meeting of the volunteers and inhabitants of Belfast, numbering about six thousand, voted unanimously an address to the French nation congratulating them on the capture of the Bastille, and

[1] Hobart to Nepean, Nov. 19, 1792.

also an address in favour of the Catholic claims, and it was observed that some of the most popular Dissenting ministers of the district spoke strongly in their favour.[1] In Dublin a new military association was formed, modelled after the French National Guards and openly avowing republican principles. Napper Tandy, Hamilton, Oliver Bond, and Henry Jackson, appear to have been the chief organisers. They adopted as their emblem the harp without a crown, surmounted with the cap of liberty. It was intended to form three battalions, and it was reported that they were to bind themselves not to lay down their arms till they had obtained the privileges desired by the Catholics and a reform of Parliament, and that similar battalions were to be formed at Belfast and Derry.[2]

Hobart had written to England in September, requesting that all information that could be discovered about the relations of Ireland with France should be sent to him, 'for although,' he said, 'I am not at all apprehensive of real danger, it is perfectly certain that there are at present a number of persons industriously employed in endeavouring to create confusion.'[3] He mentioned that he had discovered that Broughall, an active agitator in the Catholic Committee, was in correspondence with Condorcet, though he had not as yet found anything political in his letters.[4] It appears certain, however, that some political correspondence had for some time been going on between disaffected Irishmen and French agents. The mission of Bancroft in 1789 does not appear to have led to much result. In October 1790, before the agitations which have been described began, a long despatch, which was probably from his pen, was sent to the French Foreign Office. It opens with a full description of a dispute about the election of a Lord Mayor of Dublin, which had arisen between the Corporation and the Government, and which has now lost all interest, and the writer then proceeded to give a vivid, though probably not perfectly accurate, description of the state of the country. Religious hatred, he says, has gone down. Jacobitism is forgotten. Time has in-

[1] Wolfe Tone's *Memoirs*, i. 68, 69.

[2] Hobart to Nepean, Nov. 30; Westmorland to Dundas, Dec. 5, 1792; McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 35. The buttons on the buff and blue uniform of the Whig Club, bore the harp surmounted by the crown. Grattan's *Life*, iv. 71.

[3] Hobart to Nepean, Sept. 7, 1792.

[4] Ibid. Oct. 20.

sensibly effaced the memory of old injuries. The oppressed majority of the nation have begun to breathe anew, and regard with gratitude a restoration of some of the rights of Nature. 'A few years more, and the Irish may form a nation, which they have not been for six hundred years.'

Irish parties, the writer continued, are now quite unlike the old ones. They no longer grow out of civil war, violence, and proscription, but have assumed much of the character of parties in England. Corrupt men who think themselves neglected, and a few genuine patriots oppose the Government. The mass of the people, sunk in poverty and ignorance, have no more political influence than in Poland. The middle class are very few. Commerce has so little weight that there is not a single merchant in Parliament. The landlord class is the only one that is powerful.

From this position, says the writer, it is easy to forecast the reforms that may be expected. Everything that tends to increase the influence of the Legislature will be supported from all sides, but little or nothing will be done to improve the condition of the poor, to throw a larger portion of taxation on land, to purify the representative system, or to diminish the number of useless places. Ireland had lost her great opportunity when the Convention of 1783, 'a respectable and well-intentioned body, failed because it was not supported by some powerful men. Its failure has thrown a certain ridicule on Irish democracy, and it may be long before it is repaired.'[1]

In about two years, however, the aspect of Irish politics and the opinions of French observers had greatly changed. In December 1792, a French agent represented that under the guidance of six or seven daring conspirators an Irish revolution was rapidly preparing, and that France might find it a powerful auxiliary in the impending struggle.[2] From this time Irish affairs assume some prominence in the secret archives of France, and an agent named Coquebert, who was established as consul

[1] See an unsigned memorial from Dublin, Oct. 27, 1790, 'On the Affairs of Ireland,' and also a letter of Luzerne, July 27, 1790, French Foreign Office.

[2] See an unsigned memorial from London, Dec. 1, 1792, and two letters from the Minister at Paris, Dec. 9, 18, 1792, French Foreign Office.

at Dublin, seems to have been in close connection with some of the leaders of the United Irishmen.[1]

Charlemont complained bitterly that the volunteers were no longer what they had been; that the 'silly and useless affectation' of French names and appellations and emblems which had grown up among them had 'brought shame upon the institution,' and that, though he was still their nominal general, they had not for some years past in a single instance either asked or taken his advice. 'No Egyptian hierophant,' he said, 'could have invented a hieroglyphic more aptly significant of a Republic than the taking the crown from the harp and replacing it by a cap of liberty.' It had been the custom of the volunteers since their foundation to parade annually round the statue of King William III. on November 4, the anniversary of their institution, but this ceremony they now refused to perform.[2] In the following month the United Irishmen issued an address to the volunteers, calling on them to resume their arms and urging the necessity of a parliamentary reform; and some of the Dublin corps voted thanks to them for their address.[3] Rowan, Napper Tandy, Keogh, and Oliver Bond were the leading spirits in this new movement, and the United Irishmen, though chiefly directed by Protestants, now contained a considerable minority of Catholics among their members. 'The great danger,' wrote the Lord-Lieutenant, 'is from the North, where certainly the volunteering spirit, from the dislike to the Catholics, has gained ground, and if that dislike should be done away . . . as they have fallen into the guidance of the middling rank of people, their republican principles may lead to every possible mischief.' 'Some corps have already expressed their determination to force a reform of Parliament.'[4] French events occupied the foremost place in the newspapers; French victories were received by many with unconcealed delight, and there were some small attempts at illuminations and other demonstrations in the streets.

Grattan, like the other leaders of the old reform party in

[1] See a memorial written by him, Dec. 18, 1792. It appears from one of the supplemental volumes in the French Foreign Office (1773–1791) that Coquebert was in Dublin and occupied with Irish politics as early as Feb. 1791.

[2] Charlemont to Halliday, Feb. 26, 1793. *Charlemont Papers.*

[3] McNevin, p. 35.

[4] Westmorland to Dundas, Dec. 11, 1792.

Parliament, was extremely anxious that the questions of reform and Catholic emancipation should be dissociated from disloyal and republican principles. He strongly censured the conduct of the new national guard in adopting republican emblems, declaring that though he wished the Ministers of the Crown changed, the Crown itself was very essential to the prosperity of Ireland. He was decidedly in favour of the Catholic Convention, but his advice to the Catholics was beyond all things to avoid 'republican principles and French politics,' and he warned them that men connected with the Irish Government were representing them as in a state of rebellion probably in order to induce the English to assist in crushing them.[1] He refused to join the United Irishmen, but as the Whig Club had declined to commit itself to the two measures which he now deemed imperatively necessary, a new association called the 'Friends of the Constitution' was formed in December 1792, under the presidence of the Duke of Leinster. It was probably imitated from the society of 'The Friends of the People,' which had been established a few months earlier in England by Sheridan and Grey, and it was intended to promote in every way Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform, while resisting all republican innovations.[2] Grattan saw clearly that the ties of influence that bound the Catholics to their gentry were severely strained, and he feared greatly that the Government policy would give a confirmed ascendency to new and dangerous influences, which might one day precipitate the Catholic body into a career of rebellion.

The danger was indeed obvious. On the one side the Catholics found the Irish Government surrounded and supported by the men who were the most vehement and the most powerful opponents of their enfranchisement. Fitzgibbon, the Beresfords, the Elys, the great body of the large borough owners who were the pillars of the oligarchical system in Ireland, contended that the Catholics should be absolutely excluded from all share of political power. They had steadily exerted their influence against them both in the Parliament, in the Privy Council, and in the country. Men connected with or trusted by the Government had originated or stimulated the recent movement of the grand juries and county meetings, which had done so much to revive

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 73, 74. [2] Ibid. 126, 127.

the smouldering embers of religious animosity. Nor did it appear probable that their sentiments would change, for they believed, and justly believed, that the continued subjection of the Catholics was essential to the maintenance of their political monopoly. On the other hand a party supported by a great part of the Dissenters of the North were labouring in the first place to abolish that oligarchical monopoly and to replace it by a democratic representation entirely irrespective of religious distinctions, and in the next place to abolish the system of tithes, which was the greatest practical grievance, both of the poorer Catholics and of the Presbyterians. And this party was now offering its alliance to the Catholics.

Some steps of approximation soon took place. Simon Butler, the chairman of the United Irishmen, drew up and published by the direction of the society a digest of the popery laws in Ireland, which exercised a powerful influence on opinion by its clear statement of the number and magnitude of the disabilities under which, at least by the letter of the law, the Catholics still laboured. The United Irishmen gladly admitted Catholics among their members, and in many addresses to the people they steadily advocated their complete emancipation. Keogh, who was the ablest of the new Catholic leaders, was a regular attendant at the meetings of the United Irishmen, and in the spring of 1792 Wolfe Tone, the founder of the United Irishmen, and one of the most active republicans in Ireland, became paid secretary of the Catholic Committee in the place of Richard Burke. He owed his appointment to the brilliant pamphlet which he had published in the previous September, and he has recorded the interesting fact that when that pamphlet was published he did not reckon a single Catholic among his acquaintances.[1]

On the Presbyterian side the tendency towards Catholic alliance was very marked. It was shown not only by the growing power of the United Irishmen and by many successive demonstrations at Belfast, but also by the significant fact that a large number of the most popular Presbyterian ministers were active members of the new party. At the same time it is no doubt true, that the primary object of the Presbyterians

[1] Tone's *Memoirs*, i. 52.

was not Catholic emancipation but parliamentary reform; that they had in general very little natural sympathy with Catholics; that their true and governing motive was the conviction that the existing system of oligarchical and English ascendency could only be destroyed and the Constitution of Ireland established by a cordial union of the whole Irish people. Though written with directly opposite aims and wishes, the confidential letters of Lord Westmorland agree curiously with the writings of Wolfe Tone and the other leading United Irishmen in their judgment of the situation. They both contended that a cordial union between the different religious sects in Ireland, and the introduction of Catholics into political life, would inevitably lead to a reform of Parliament, which would destroy at once the oligarchical ascendency and the controlling influence of the English Executive over the Irish Parliament, and would induce Irish statesmen to regulate their policy mainly by the public opinion of their own country. It was the Belfast doctrine that the English Government desired to keep the people divided in order to govern them, and that to put an end to this division should be first object of every Irish patriot.

That this was a predominating, or at least a rapidly growing, opinion among Irish reformers appears to me indubitable, though the letters of the Lord-Lieutenant not unnaturally magnified the signs of dissension. There were, however, still a few reformers, who, like Charlemont, would have severed the question of reform from the Catholic question. There were occasions in which it was found necessary to exclude the Catholic question from resolutions, lest it should produce dissension, and among the lower orders both of the Presbyterians and Catholics in Ulster, old religious fanaticisms and animosities still blazed fiercely in the conflicts between the Peep-o'-Day Boys and the Defenders. There was a curious contrast between the members of the Established Church and the Protestant Dissenters in their attitude towards Catholics. Among the former, as far as can be now ascertained, purely religious intolerance seems to have almost completely died away, and their opposition to the Catholic claims was chiefly an opposition of interest or monopoly. Among the Presbyterians a strong feeling of common interest was producing a Catholic alliance, but re-

ligious animosities, though greatly diminished, were not extinct, and it was not impossible to revive them.

All the best evidence we possess concurs in showing that there was as yet no serious disaffection in the Catholic body outside a small circle of Dublin shopkeepers. The spirit which had induced the Catholics to select as their agent and representative the only son of the greatest living opponent of the French Revolution still survived, and although they now felt keenly the disabilities that maintained them in the position of a subject and an inferior caste, they had no wish to throw themselves into opposition to the Government. No class of men had been more steadily loyal, more essentially conservative in their sympathies, than the Catholic gentry, and if the fatal policy of the penal laws had not reduced them to insignificance, if they had continued to form a large and important part of the landed interest of Ireland at a time when landed property still retained its natural influence in the State, it is probable that the Government of Ireland would have proved little more difficult than that of any other Catholic country. The political importance of a large class of Catholic landed gentry would no doubt have been incompatible with the permanent maintenance for the exclusive benefit of a small fraction of the people of a religious establishment supported by tithes, but it would have supplied a safe guiding influence for the Catholic peasantry, and a great element of conservatism and stability in the country. But the articles in the penal code regulating the succession of land, forbidding Catholics to purchase land or to acquire those long and profitable leases which frequently developed into ownership, and offering to the eldest son of a Catholic landlord overwhelming inducements to conform, had immensely aggravated the unfortunate disposition of property which the confiscations had begun; and the recent secession had weakened, though it had not destroyed, the power of the few remaining Catholic gentry over their people. But like the Catholic prelates those gentry were still entirely on the side of loyalty, and a large portion of the seceding body had again been reconciled to the Committee.[1]

The general influence of the priesthood appears to have been on the same side. Among its inferior members, it is true, there

[1] Plowden, ii. 387, 388.

were grossly ignorant and disreputable characters, who were probably often connected with the Whiteboy outrages; and, as we shall see in the course of the narrative, there is some evidence that a new and dangerous spirit was beginning to ferment among them; but the priests had not yet become political leaders, and as a class they were still essentially conservative. This was the opinion repeatedly expressed by the Lord-Lieutenant, and it was equally the opinion of Wolfe Tone, who believed that there was no probability of drawing them into his cause till they were educated at home. It could scarcely, indeed, be doubted how a priesthood educated in continental seminaries must have looked upon a Revolution which had burst like a great antichristian religion upon the world, subverting the ancient order of belief and authority, plundering the clergy, destroying the altars, turning the greatest Catholic nation in Christendom into an implacable enemy of the Church. The peasantry, sunk in poverty and ignorance, had no political interests, and, although they neither loved, nor feared, nor respected the law, and could be easily combined against tithes, or pasture land, or the enclosure of commons, or for the rescue of prisoners, or in resistance to bailiffs or creditors, they had not as yet shown the smallest disposition to rebel against the political order under which they lived. Over a great part of Ireland the people were in a high degree turbulent, riotous, and anarchical; but anarchy is a different thing from disaffection, though it prepares the soil in which disaffection can most rapidly grow. As yet, however, the seed had not been sown. On no other hypothesis can the perfect political quiet that prevailed in Catholic Ireland during the first ninety years of the century—in times when England was involved in great foreign or internal struggles, and in times when Ireland was almost denuded of troops—be reasonably explained. The time was soon to come when all this would change; but Catholic disaffection was still a rare and superficial thing, and even the violent party appear to have generally aimed only at legitimate and moderate reforms, though they were prepared to obtain them by revolutionary measures and alliances.

The election of Catholic delegates had greatly alarmed the Lord-Lieutenant, but before the Convention met he wrote that great divisions had become apparent: 'Keogh, Byrne, and

the Committee [being] for violent proceedings, the gentleman and people returned from the country for moderate, which I dare say Messrs. Keogh and Byrne will be obliged to acquiesce in.'[1] 'Though they are unanimous in the pursuit of their object, great divisions prevail amongst them, the delegates from the country having apprehensions from the levelling principles of the Committee, but particularly Mr. Keogh.'[2] 'Be assured,' he wrote a few days later, 'there is no preparation for insurrection at present. The United Irishmen are not in force at present, but they are a very popular justification for the exertions of Government. It may perhaps be thought advisable to attempt a militia when we put down the volunteers. . . . Every account we get of Catholic deputies mentions the most pacific intentions, but certainly Mr. Keogh, the present leader of the Catholic Committee, is the author and manager of the new volunteer corps.'[3] 'We must be cautious not to give offence to the old volunteers, a very great majority of whom are certainly on the present occasion strong supporters of the Protestant Establishment. . . . I do not believe more than four hundred or five hundred in Dublin are concerned in this business [of the National Guard]. The Catholic shopkeepers in this, as in every other great town, have caught in a degree the French mania, but in equal proportion the Protestants are loyal.'[4]

The Catholic Convention met on December 3, and nearly at the same time a despatch arrived from England intimating clearly to the Irish Government that no military assistance could be expected. 'The comfortless communication which we last received,' wrote Hobart, 'without even a private friend to intimate confidentially upon what ground we were made so completely independent, has driven us to look at home for our safety, which if we can effect we may deem ourselves peculiarly fortunate.' Measures were accordingly taken to form a militia, which, the Chief Secretary said, was a matter of extreme difficulty owing to the general preference for volunteering. 'You have much more,' he added, 'at stake in Ireland than you are aware of. You are taught to believe that it is a mere question

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Nov. 28, 1792.

[2] Westmorland to Dundas, Nov. 29, 1792.

[3] Westmorland to Pitt, Dec. 1 1792.

[4] Ibid. Dec. 4, 1792.

between Catholic and Protestant. I wish it was. . . . Be assured, however, that it is of much deeper concern to us all, and that it goes to the complete overturning of the Constitution.'[1]

All the information that was received of the proceedings of the Catholic Convention concurred in representing it as loyal and moderate, but it took one step which was naturally very offensive to Westmorland, and which clearly showed its sense of the hostility of the Castle. It determined to petition the King directly, and not through the medium of the Irish Government. The petition was signed by Dr. Troy and Dr. Moylan on behalf of themselves and the Catholic prelates and clergy, and by the several delegates for the different districts they represented; and five delegates, including Keogh and Byrne, were selected to present it to the King. 'You now probably see,' wrote Westmorland when this step was announced, 'the consequence of having so long delayed the Garter, which would have prevented such a proceeding. The Catholics are persuaded that the English Government wish them better than the Irish; they have brought the point to issue. The similar belief has produced an alarm and consternation amongst the Protestants, the ill effect of which, if not done away, in its various consequences is beyond my expression or even calculation. . . . You must contrive to satisfy the Roman Catholic delegates that the English and Irish Government have the same sentiments, or you must be convinced of the impossibility of carrying on the Government. It is certainly our business to conciliate the Catholics as much as we can without losing the Protestants. . . . I am convinced the Catholics do not generally mean, nor are the knot of disaffected prepared for, mischief at present; and I am equally convinced that no concession will satisfy the present democratic spirits who have the management of the Roman Catholics, the present frame of the Government existing; but I by no means include the general body of the Catholics. The gentry and priesthood are much attached to monarchy, but these confounded factions of the towns have persuaded them that everything is to be carried by intimidation. I mean to try the experiment of the militia. If the Protestants, backed by the Government, come boldly forward, this levelling system will be of little importance. How-

[1] Hobart to Nepean, Dec. 5, 1792.

ever, in the present troubled state of the world, it is essential to be prepared in force.' He asks for more troops. 'Our conduct,' he says, 'for the next month is most critical. . . . However, it is unavoidable, and I am satisfied for the present there is no danger, whatever the levelling spirit and success of the French may hereafter produce.' [1]

He now acknowledged that Protestant opinion was by no means altogether hostile to the Catholic claims, though he believed that this disposition was the result of a mere transitory panic, and was evidently anxious that the English Government should not embark on a policy of conciliation. 'The success of the French, the probability of England being involved in war or insurrection, and being unable, and what is worse, the suspicion that she is unwilling, to assist Ireland, frightens the Protestants. The violence of the levellers and republicans has altered in some degree the opinions of many on the Catholic question, and they begin to feel and express in conversation the necessity of attaching the Catholics to the Constitution. I speak of the city only. I have no reason to think, and do not believe, this temper has spread to the country. If the question of elective franchise was to be tried in the temper of *this hour*, the Catholics, with the assistance of Government, would have many friends; but I cannot say the concession could be carried by any exertion, or that if it was forced it would not give such offence to the Protestants as would ruin the Government absolutely, and lay it entirely open to every popular democratic concession that could be started; in short, that every public man would quit the English attachment, which they would consider as untenable, and endeavour to acquire strength and favour in the cause of the Irish nation. . . . Whether the concession is or is not beneficial to England, need not be the question. I rather think not; should the Protestants be much divided on the point we cannot support it, but it is at best our business to let them understand that the concession, whatever it may be, is their own choice and not any compulsion or desertion of ours. I believe the conciliatory temper to be the panic of the hour, and that the anti-Catholic feeling upon the least stand being made will return. . . . The Chancellor, Speaker, Parnell, and others, seem to consider English Govern-

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Dec. 7, 1792.

ment ruined in the concession. I do not, therefore, recommend anything different from the tenor of my despatches at present. . . . If the temper of the country will bear conciliation, you shall have timely notice, and if it is thought expedient to do anything for the Catholics, let me manage. I can tell what can and what cannot be done, and at least whatever is palatable should come from the staunch friends of Government. . . . On no account give any encouragement or expectation to Keogh or the deputies. If anything appears to be obtained by the influence of Keogh particularly, the whole Irish Catholics will follow him, and be assured he has views of the most alarming nature to the present Constitution. . . . You must at all events either by yourselves in England or through me express a firm determination to support the Constitution, and if I could relieve the Protestants from the unfortunate jealousy they have, the present panic would cease. . . . Don't run away with the notion of concession being easy or even practicable, but in whatever we do we must conciliate the Protestant mind to England, or his Majesty, at least his Government, will not long have power in Ireland. I really believe one word from England of support of the Constitution against whoever should attempt to disturb it, would have astonishing effect. . . . The present hour is not fit for concession if it can be avoided, but perhaps by cautious management the difficulties may be diminished if you wish it. We must avoid, till we see our way, positive pledging one way or another.'[1]

The leading members of the new National Guards invited all the volunteer companies in Dublin to meet on December 9, to celebrate the triumph of liberty in France. The Government, on the day immediately preceding the intended muster, issued a proclamation forbidding all seditious assemblies, and commanding the magistrates, if necessary, to suppress them by military force. It was drawn up in terms that were carefully chosen, so as not to be offensive to the old volunteers, and no attempt was made to disobey it. The disaffection, however, was daily increasing, and seditious newspapers, seditious broadsides, seditious ballads sung in the streets, seditious cries in the theatre, and attempts, though hitherto in vain, to seduce soldiers

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Dec. 9, 1792.

from their allegiance, all indicated the uneasiness that was abroad. 'If the levelling spirit,' wrote the Lord-Lieutenant, 'is not checked, the worst consequences may ensue. What we chiefly want is to undeceive the people respecting the indifference of England. . . . The reforming spirit has spread surprisingly within the last fortnight.' He urgently implores that fresh troops should be sent over.[1] The United Irishmen proposed to consolidate the union of sects by sending a deputation to the Catholic Convention, but that body, with remarkable prudence, declined to receive it.[2]

In Dublin, but the Lord-Lieutenant thought only there, a belief had spread among men of property that England was 'indifferent about the fate of the establishment and property of Ireland,' and it had thrown them 'into a most miserable state of despondency, which has worked a spirit of conciliation to the Catholics, upon the principle of attaching them to the Constitution to save it from the levellers.' He adds, however, that it was panic, and not conviction; that the Chancellor, the Speaker, Beresford, and Parnell were unchanged in their sentiments, and that Catholic suffrage, if carried against the opinion of the privileged classes of the country, would, he feared, very probably ruin the English Government. 'All the politicians would, either from resentment or policy, look to popularity in Ireland, and . . . every unpleasant Irish question of trade, particularly the India one, and every popular scheme to fetter English Government, would be pressed in an irresistible manner.' The great Catholic body is not connected with the United Irishmen, but their leaders in Dublin are. Their conduct 'renders concession dangerous, for if given in the moment of intimidation, who can answer for the limit that may give content? . . . If the Protestants are alienated, the connection between the countries in my opinion is at an end. If the concession is found advisable, and we can manage the business in a manner not to alienate the Protestants, it will not be so dangerous, though it will certainly be hazardous, and at least every step of conciliating the two descriptions of people that inhabit Ireland diminishes the probability of that object to be wished, a union with England. Before the present panic, it was a good deal in the thoughts of

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Dec. 10, 1792. [2] Ibid.

people, as preferable to being overwhelmed by the Catholics, as Protestants termed concessions, or continuing slaves, in the Catholic phrase. That conversation, since the Protestants have been persuaded that England either could or would not help them, has subsided.' More troops, he again says, are necessary to the security of the country, but he still believes that 'a big word from England, of her determination to support the Protestant Establishment, would set everything quiet.'[1]

'The most able and most attached to English Government,' he wrote two days later, 'will not hear of concession in the present state. The Chancellor professes himself indifferent on the question, except as a servant of English Government, to which he considers himself bound, and in his mind concession under the present circumstances is so fatal to the English connection, that every risk is to be run rather than yield. I asked him in very strong terms whether he was prepared for a rebellion in the North and South at the same instant. He said (in which I suspect he was right) that he did not apprehend there was much danger of either; that gentlemen were very bold on paper, but very shy of risking either their lives or their fortunes, but that, if it was to happen, England had better undertake a war in Ireland whilst the Protestants were her friends, than when she had no friends in the country, which would be the case after the repeal of the Popery Code; that it was ridiculous to suppose that England could manage Ireland by any influence of Government, if the public voice directed the Government, and that in a few years she must have recourse to a second management of the sword or conquest.' Such an opinion from the ablest of the supporters of the Government had naturally great weight, but Westmorland professed himself ready to do what was possible to meet the wishes of the English Ministry. 'I cannot,' he says, 'consider the Catholics, in a political light, as a powerful body in the country, nor should I be much afraid of their political influence; but if they can establish an assembly or representative body of the people, and . . . procure [*sic*] the people to follow them, such a sect of innovators, if encouraged by success, will eventually overset an aristocratical Government. There is certainly great danger in

[1] Westmorland to Dundas, Dec. 11, 1792.

provoking rebellion, but there is much greater chance of provoking it, if the Government should attempt anything for the Catholics and should fail. But in my judgment the greatest danger is in concession, if the Protestant mind should not be strongly for it; for if the Protestants in Parliament, as well as out of Parliament, think England has sacrificed them, be assured it will never be forgiven. The sense of the Protestants, who, unless there is a revolution like the French one, will always have the power and management, will run against the English Government.' The best course is to be prepared for refusal and resistance, unless the Protestants decidedly desired conciliation.[1]

The general tone of the Catholic Convention, Westmorland acknowledged, was very moderate, and Keogh greatly increased his influence in it by entirely repressing all evidence of a levelling spirit.[2] It was chiefly owing to him that the United Irishmen abstained from sending a deputation to the Catholic Convention, but the Convention passed a warm vote of thanks to Belfast; they determined, contrary to their first intention, not to restrict their petition to votes and juries, but to ask for a full admission to all the rights and privileges of the Constitution, and they sent the delegates who carried this petition to England by way of Belfast, where they were received with a great outburst of popular applause.[3] The main body of the Catholics gave little or no cause for apprehension. General Dundas had been visiting the South, and reported that the food riots at Cork had only become formidable on account of the timidity of the magistrates, that in all the country he passed through the people were perfectly quiet, and that the lower orders appeared absolutely indifferent to political discussions. 'The Catholics,' said Westmorland, 'have to my belief no scheme, plan, or thought of insurrection.' In Dublin opinion was rapidly calming; a strong spirit of loyalty was manifested, and the levelling party appeared inconsiderable, but Defender riots were extending in Louth and Monaghan, though the troops were never resisted. Londonderry was the centre of a most

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Dec. 14, 1792.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Wyse's *History of the Catholic Association*, ii. append. p. 13; Grattan's *Life*, iv. 78–80; Wolfe Tone's *Memoirs*, i. 86, 87.

desperate revolutionary spirit, and all through the North volunteering was proceeding rapidly. Ulster alone, at the close of 1792, appeared to the Lord-Lieutenant a serious source of danger. On the Catholic question he very significantly observes, 'The temper of the people, with exception to our leading Cabinet friends, is grown much more conciliatory.'[1]

The method of writing history chiefly by extracts from ministerial letters is, I fear, very tedious to readers, but in the particular period with which I am now concerned, it is, I believe, the most trustworthy that can be adopted. That period was not one of salient or dramatic interest, but it was vitally important in Irish history, for it prepared the way, not only for the great Rebellion of 1798, but also for the profound and permanent alienation of the Irish Catholics from England. To ascertain, as far as possible amid conflicting statements, the true sentiments of the different sections of the Irish people, to follow and explain the strangely fluctuating and discordant judgments of the Irish rulers, to disclose the secret springs of their policy as they are revealed in their confidential correspondence, is here the chief duty of the historian. It is plain that the government of the country had become much more difficult since the troubles in France, but if my estimate be correct it is equally plain that the situation was still far from desperate. The steady progress of material wealth was making the conditions of life more easy, and in some degree correcting the great evils which were due to the extirpation of Irish manufactures by England. Ulster had caught the passion for reform, but though much speculative republicanism may have existed among the Presbyterians, and though most of the United Irishmen may have convinced themselves that reform could only be extorted by revolution, there were probably very few who would not have been contented with reform. The same assertion may be made still more confidently of the Catholic democracy of the towns, while the great body of the Catholics were as yet almost untouched by politics and completely subservient to landlords and prelates who were devoted to the connection, and extremely hostile to republican ideas. The Catholic prelates were now cordially in favour of the Convention, and the reconciliation of the seceding party to the old Committee had effec-

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Dec. 18; to Dundas, Dec. 19, 22, 26, 29, 30, 1792.

tually moderated its proceedings.[1] It was plain, however, that large measures of reform were required, and would the Protestants of the Established Church who had the ascendency in Ireland consent to carry them? The Catholic question, as we have seen, had been excluded from the objects of the Whig Club, and when an attempt was made in November to take it into consideration, the resolution was negatived by a majority of thirteen.[2] The Association of the 'Friends of the Constitution,' however, which was a purely Protestant body presided over by the Duke of Leinster, and supported by Grattan, made 'an effectual reform in the representation of the people in Parliament, including persons of all religious persuasions,' its first object.

A clear distinction must here be drawn between the main body of the country gentlemen, lawyers, and yeomen, and the small group of great borough owners who chiefly controlled the Parliament. There is reason to believe that Grattan truly represented the former, and that a majority at least were quite prepared for Catholic enfranchisement. It is true that the cry of danger to property held under the Act of Settlement had been raised by Fitzgibbon, and had influenced some considerable minds, but there is I think no evidence that it had spread very far. The fact that in our own day popular Irish politics have taken the form of an organised attack upon landed property, will probably mislead those who do not consider how widely the events which we have witnessed, differ from those which were feared in 1792. In our generation a small body of Irish landlords, divested through legislation and social changes of their former political power, and at the same time firmly attached to the connection and the Union, have found themselves confronted by an organisation which was hostile to both, and which accordingly made the expatriation and ruin of the class who were the chief supporters of the English connection one of its main objects. Having signally failed in obtaining the support of the great mass of the Irish tenantry by appeals to national or anti-English sentiment, it skilfully resorted to the policy of appealing to their cupidity; it gave the movement an essentially agrarian character by making it a war against rents, and it thus succeeded for a time in combining them in a dishonest

[1] Plowden, ii. 387, 388. [2] Ibid. 380.

compact to refuse the payment of their debts. The movement was favoured by a period of genuine distress; by some undoubted acts of landlord harshness committed chiefly by men who had purchased land at the invitation of the Government under the Encumbered Estates Act, and who treated it as an ordinary form of investment; by the system of party government which gives a wholly disproportionate power to isolated groups of members, who are indifferent to the interests of the Empire; and especially by the passing of a land law which was popularly attributed to the agitation, and which had the undoubted effect of confusing the ownership of land, and of transferring without compensation to one class of the community, a portion of the legal property of another. But the question in 1792 was not one between landlords and tenants. It was whether existing titles could be seriously disputed by the descendants of those who had been deprived of their properties by the Act of Settlement. The great majority of the descendants of the old families had long since been scattered over the Continent. Nearly one hundred and thirty years had elapsed since the Act that was complained of. Innumerable purchasers, leaseholders, mortgagees, and other encumbrancers had grafted new interests on the existing titles. The security of a great part of the property of the Catholics of Ireland was inextricably blended with them, and the tenantry and the labourers would have gained nothing by their overthrow. Under such circumstances an attempt to impugn them might well be deemed in the highest degree improbable, and the success of such an attempt almost impossible.[1]

But apart from this, the Protestant gentry had little to lose and much to gain by Catholic enfranchisement. The hierarchy of middle men which rose between the cottier and the owner of the soil was a great economical evil, but it at least saved the landowning class from that invidious isolation which is now the great source of their weakness and their unpopularity. Their political ascendency over their tenants was indisputable, and an Act which multiplied the voters on their estates tended directly to their political importance. On grounds of interest they had

[1] See a powerful statement of the case in *A Letter to the United Irishmen on the proposed Restoration of Catholic Rights*, by Todd Jones (Dublin, 1792).

no reason to regret the destruction of the corrupt oligarchical monopoly which had so greatly dwarfed their consequence. On public grounds they had every reason to desire it. They had always murmured against the system of tithes, and their theological feelings were extremely languid.

That the great borough owners were, as a rule, strongly opposed to Catholic enfranchisement is unquestionable, and this fact was the chief difficulty of the situation. It was, however, contended by the supporters of the Catholics that the influence of the Government on this class was overwhelming; that the opposition to Catholic enfranchisement drew its real force from the countenance which was given to it by the leading members of the Irish Government, and that if the Government pronounced decidedly in favour of the measure, all serious opposition to it would melt away. The opinions of Richard Burke derive their special value from his confidential relations with some of the leading members of the Irish Parliament, and a few sentences may here be quoted from a memorial which was presented by him to Lord Grenville in the beginning of November. 'The upper ranks of people,' he wrote, 'who are neither Catholics nor Dissenters, it is commonly thought are almost universally free in their religious opinions, except the women and children.' While the English Ministers had long desired 'to raise the Catholics from their intolerable oppression,' 'the effective part of the Irish Administration had formed a conspiracy to perpetuate that servitude,' set themselves at the head of the Protestant faction, 'and brought out the grand juries and corporations in order to embarrass the English Government.' The Ministerial press is full of violent attacks on the Catholics and their supporters. 'The Protestant ascendency,' a new term, is much come into vogue. A report has been industriously spread that the English Ministers were encouraging the Catholics in order to bring about a legislative union, and 'the word union in the popular phraseology of this country signifies a conspiracy against the liberties of Ireland.' 'If the Irish Ministers say there is any difficulty in carrying any measure for the Catholics, they deceive the King. The opposition to it is artificial, and a Ministerial instigation. It will cease when the cause is withdrawn. I have seen some of the great Parliament men. One of the first of them (and com-

monly supposed to be the most hostile to the Catholics) said, Let Mr. Pitt send an order that it *shall* be done, and it will be done. He gave me to understand he was very willing to do his part. . . . He expressly denied that the sense of the Protestant gentlemen was to be taken from the grand juries. . . . When the Catholics are restored to their constitutional rights, it will be the most popular measure of his Majesty's Government —I mean among the Protestants of Ireland.'[1]

The English Government appears to have to a great extent adopted this view. The decisive word against the Catholics for which Lord Westmorland had so long waited was never uttered; but instead of it, after a long period of hesitation, there came a clear intimation that the English Ministers were resolved to insist on the liberal policy they had formerly recommended. In November Pitt wrote that from inquiries made by a confidential agent in Birmingham he had reason to fear that the Irish Catholics were very generally armed, and that 'any opposition to their Convention would be the signal for a general rising.' 'My opinion,' he said, 'is invariable as to the necessity of vigorously resisting force or menace; but the more I think on the subject the more I regret that firmness against violence is not accompanied by symptoms of a disposition to conciliate, and by holding out at least the possibility of future concession in return for a perseverance in peaceable and loyal conduct. . . . If the contest is necessary to support regular government and to resist the appearance of violence, I think the sort of support I have mentioned will be readily given from hence to that extent. But if the Protestants of Ireland rely on the weight of this country being employed to enforce the principle that in no case anything more is to be conceded to peaceable and constitutional applications from Catholics, that reliance I think will fail, and I fairly own that in the present state of the world I think such a system cannot ultimately succeed. . . . I state this without reserve to yourself. You may be assured that not the slightest intimation of this nature has been given by me to any one connected with the Catholics. . . . I am sorry to say the news from the Continent is far from improving.'[2]

[1] Nov. 4, 1792 (Record Office).
[2] Pitt to Westmorland, Nov. 10, 1792.

This last sentence was probably by no means irrelevant to the determination of the Government. The events in Flanders spread universal disquietude through England, and were gradually persuading the Ministers that they were on the eve of a struggle, which would task all the resources of the Empire. 'Under the present circumstances of this country and of Europe,' wrote Dundas about a month later, 'it is particularly desirable, if it be possible, to avoid any occasion which might lead those who are in general attached to order and regular government to join themselves with persons of opposite principles. It seems, therefore, to be of the utmost consequence not to lose the assistance of the Catholics in support of the established Constitution.' He accordingly directs the Lord-Lieutenant to 'hold a language of conciliation' towards them, and he announces his positive conviction that it is for the interest of the Protestants of Ireland, as well as the Empire at large, that the Catholics, if peaceable and loyal, should obtain 'participation, on the same terms with Protestants, in the elective franchise and the formation of juries.'[1]

After the letters I have quoted, the decision could not have been agreeable to the Lord-Lieutenant, but he declared himself ready to execute the wishes of the Ministers, and to endeavour to 'guide the opinions of his Majesty's servants' towards conciliation. The task, he said, was very difficult, as 'the Chancellor, the Speaker, and many other of the confidential friends of Government, are averse to its policy.' But 'the circumstances of Europe, which have their effect in this country, make such a risk expedient and perhaps unavoidable.' 'With regard to the dispositions of the persons of weight and influence in Ireland, who have acted in opposition to Government,' he said, 'I believe that Lord Shannon, Mr. Conolly, and Mr. Ponsonby are still decided in resisting the Catholic claim, if they could see the practicability of success. . . . The Duke of Leinster and Mr. Grattan have decided for the Catholics, and also for a reform in Parliament, and their object will be to induce the Catholics to assist in this scheme. Our endeavours, on the contrary, will be pointed to detach them from such pursuits. The northern counties are growing extremely violent for effect-

[1] Dundas to Westmorland, Dec. 17, 1792.

ing reform in Parliament, and are raising volunteer associations with this view. It will, I fear, be necessary to increase our forces in that part of the kingdom, and I could wish that a frigate were stationed at Belfast with a view to overawe that town.'[1] It was reported that serious disturbances had broken out at Louth, and 'the levelling system, under the mask of reform, is spreading furiously.' 'The source of all the mischief is the town of Belfast. The merchants of that town are the persons principally at the bottom of it.' Keogh is connected with the worst of the agitators. 'He is a reformer and a leveller, and be assured no Catholic concession will answer his purpose.'[2] 'I cannot help thinking,' wrote the Chief Secretary, 'there is more ground for alarm in this country than in any part of the King's dominions. Our security is in the army, and if that is not kept up, the levellers of the North will overawe every part of the kingdom. Recollect that we have no militia, and that the volunteering system affords every man almost a right to arms.'[3] 'The levelling spirit is spreading so fast here, and such pains are taking to raise volunteer corps connected with it, that a considerable military force will be necessary in Ireland.'[4] An address had already been issued by the United Irishmen to the volunteers, to convene a Protestant assembly at Dungannon, for the purpose of urging a reform of Parliament.[5]

The crisis was a very anxious one. 'Though I do believe,' wrote the Lord-Lieutenant, 'at this moment we can carry the Catholic concession of juries and elective franchise, yet it is a concession of fear and not inclination.' 'It is a most delicate and difficult business. I own I am more afraid of the weakening of Government in other points than even of the Catholic concessions.'[6] The intended speech from the throne, as sent over to England, contained no allusion to the Catholics, but the English Ministers inserted a clause in their favour, and peremptorily enjoined that it should be read. The Lord-Lieutenant said that he would obey, but that both the Chancellor and Speaker considered it most mischievous, and he once more asked for a declaration that this concession was to be the last.[7] 'You

[1] Westmorland to Dundas, Dec. 29.
[2] Hobart to Nepean, Dec. 29.
[3] Ibid. Jan. 1, 1793.
[4] Ibid. Jan. 9, 1793.
[5] Ibid. Dec. 20, 1792.
[6] Westmorland to Dundas, Dec. 29, 1792.
[7] Ibid. Jan. 9, 1793.

may pretty well argue the unpleasantness and difficulty of my situation,' he continued, 'when the men of talent and lead in his Majesty's service consider themselves sacrificed, particularly by the subject being mentioned in the speech. They are all in so unpleasant a temper that I can hardly persuade them to consult upon anything.'[1]

If the government of Ireland had been conducted upon principles which were really constitutional, there would have been at this time a great change of persons. A complete revolution of policy was contemplated, and it was to be carried in opposition to the known opinion of Lord Westmorland's Government. In 1792 the Parliament had refused to concede to the Catholics the county franchise, even when it had been so artificially and unequally limited that only an infinitesimal fraction of them could have benefited by it. It had formally, and by an immense majority, ordered a perfectly respectful petition, asking for some share in the franchise, to be removed from the table, and the leading persons in the Government had placed themselves at the head of an anti-Catholic movement, which was based, not on grounds of mere temporary expediency, but on the ground that any admission of Catholics to political power would be fatal to the Constitution. The same Ministers were now to support in the same Parliament a Bill for conceding to Catholics the county franchise on exactly the same terms as to the Protestants. Among the great unwritten changes in the Constitution which in England had followed the Revolution of 1688, none was more important than the gradual establishment of the maxim that, when the policy of a particular set of Ministers is discarded, those Ministers should resign their seats in favour of the men who have identified themselves with the policy that has triumphed. By such means only can the consistency of parties, the authority of Government, and the character of statesmen be maintained, and when, as in 1829 and 1846, the disposition of parties renders such a change impossible, a great blow is given both to public confidence and to party government. But in Ireland policies did not change with the ebb and flow of opinion manifested at general elections,

[1] Westmorland to Dundas, Jan. 11, 1793.

and Ministers held their power by a wholly different tenure from those in England.

It is a remarkable fact that, even after the Parliament met, the Government were uncertain what measure of relief was to be granted to the Catholics. The Catholic deputation was very graciously received by the King, and dismissed in a manner which clearly showed that the Ministers desired a Relief Bill, but no exact measures were specified, and the delegates were referred to the 'wisdom and liberality of the Irish Parliament.' This, like most of the proceedings of the English Ministers on the Catholic question, was exceedingly displeasing to the Irish Government, but Dundas, in a long and able letter, defended his conduct. It was impossible, he said, that a respectful petition from a great body of the King's subjects should not be presented, and it was equally impossible that it should be received with a 'sullen silence.' 'Your Excellency,' he proceeds, 'in your letter of the 9th expresses an opinion that concession to the Catholics would be more palatable among the Protestants of Ireland if they were assured that what they now did was to be understood as the ultimatum. . . . It must immediately occur to your Excellency, that before it was possible for me to speak with any precision on that proposition, it would be necessary for me to know what is the extent of the concessions the Irish Government is willing to concur with. . . . We are perfectly ready to declare it to be our firm determination to resist any attempt to subvert the Protestant Establishment of Ireland, and to maintain the frame of Government in King, Lords and Commons; but unfortunately we and his Majesty's confidential servants in Ireland differ essentially as to the best mode of securing those objects.' More than a year had passed—so the Lord-Lieutenant was reminded—since Dundas had urged that the best way to attach the Irish Catholics to the Constitution was to give them some share of its benefits, but he had not been fortunate enough to convince the Irish Government, and accordingly the experiment had not been tried. The concessions which might then have quieted the Catholics would now be insufficient, and the Irish Ministers were implored 'to give a candid and liberal consideration to the whole of this subject, and to weigh well the consequences of leaving behind any sore

point of the question.' He earnestly hoped that the franchise and the juries might be conceded without resistance, and that Catholics might at least be admitted to such civil and military offices as are merely offices of emolument, if the state of Protestant opinion will not allow of their admission to offices of magisterial authority or political power. His knowledge of the special circumstances of Ireland was not sufficient to enable him to say whether the admission of Catholics to municipal franchises, guilds, and corporations, was feasible or expedient, but he was clearly of opinion that all laws which cramped their industry or restrained them in the exercise of any trade or manufacture must be repealed, and that they should be eligible for all political situations in corporations which were open to Protestant Dissenters. He was also quite ready to admit them freely to the army. The Catholics complained that they were disabled from founding any university, college, or endowed school. If this be so, it was a grievance which ought certainly to be remedied, for nothing could be more impolitic than to compel Catholics, by such restrictions, to educate their children in foreign seminaries. The complaint that they could not obtain degrees in Dublin University seemed less reasonable, for their admission would be inconsistent with the foundation of the University. If, however, on account of this incapacity they were at a disadvantage in pursuing the professions of law or physic, some steps must be taken to remove the injury. Their last complaint was that they could not carry arms without a special licence. Dundas fully agreed with the Irish Government that it would be unwise to allow the indiscriminate use of arms to all classes of the community, and he commended this subject to the special attention of the Irish Parliament. It ought, however, to be dealt with on general principles, and not with any reference to religious beliefs. 'There are some Protestants in Ireland whose principles render them much more unsafe to be trusted with arms than many of those professing the Catholic religion.'[1]

The memorable session of 1793 opened on January 10. The

[1] Dundas to Westmorland, Jan. (the day not given) 1793. The petition had been presented to the King on the 2nd. See Tone's *Memoirs*, i. 89, 90.

speech from the throne was eminently warlike. It deplored the disturbances that had broken out in different parts of the kingdom, the evident desire of some persons to excite a spirit of discontent and effect by violence an alteration in the Constitution, the ambition of France which had led her to interfere with the government of other countries, and especially her conduct towards 'his Majesty's allies the States-General,' which was 'neither conformable to the law of nations nor the positive stipulations of existing treaties,' and which was especially blamable as 'both his Majesty and the States-General had observed the strictest neutrality with regard to the affairs of France.' It announced an augmentation of the forces; a prohibition of the export of corn, provisions, naval stores, arms and ammunition, and the establishment of a militia, and it contained the following clause which had been inserted in England: 'I have it in particular command from his Majesty to recommend it to you to apply yourselves to the consideration of such measures as may be most likely to strengthen and cement a general union of sentiment among all classes and descriptions of his Majesty's subjects in support of the established Constitution; with this view his Majesty trusts that the situation of his Majesty's Catholic subjects will engage your serious attention, and in the consideration of this subject he relies on the wisdom and liberality of his Parliament.'[1]

Apart from its substance, the phraseology of this clause was very significant. From the Revolution to the reign of George III. the Catholics had always been designated in official documents as 'papists,' or 'persons professing the popish religion.' In 1792 it was observed that this phraseology was changed, and in Langrishe's Relief Act, and in the speech from the throne, the term 'Roman Catholic' was employed. In the first viceregal speech in 1793 the qualification was dropped, and for the first time since the Parliament of James II. the term 'Catholic' was employed from the throne.[2]

The address was moved in the House of Commons by Lord Tyrone and seconded in a short speech by Arthur Wesley, who

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 3.

[2] See Mant's *History of the Church of Ireland*, ii. 721–725. In the closing speech of the session the Lord-Lieutenant reverted to the term 'Roman Catholic.'

little dreamed how great a part he was destined to bear in closing, both on the Continent and in Ireland, the series of events which opened in this year. The Chief Secretary noticed that there was but little difference of opinion, and that not a single man spoke on either side of the House who did not express in forcible terms his reprobation of everything leading to tumult or disorder or French principles of government.[1] Grattan in a long and powerful speech marked out clearly the line of his policy. He began by a formidable attack on the Ministry. The state of the country was indeed alarming, and public opinion was profoundly disquieted, but this was the inevitable and predicted result of the Government policy about reform and about the Catholics. The bitterest opponents of the Constitution of 1782 were in power, and their manifest and almost avowed design was to make that Constitution an empty name. The periodical 'sales of the House of Commons,' the public declaration of these sales, the recent creation of twenty new parliamentary places for the sake of corruption, the sale of peerages, the patronage of all kinds of abuses and peculations, the systematic rejection of every constitutional Bill which tended to diminish corruption or assimilate the Irish Constitution to that of Great Britain; 'these things and many more taken separately or all together, have totally and universally deprived of all weight, authority, or credit, the Parliament of Ireland.' The Ministers meant to attack the Constitution, but they have gone far to undermine the throne, and if the writings of Paine were now popular in Ireland, if irregular conventions and associations were everywhere multiplying, this was mainly because constitutional reform had been steadily resisted, and because the Irish Government was one of the most anomalous and most corrupt in Christendom.

The policy of the Ministers towards the Catholics has been not less infatuated. They have driven them into the paths of agitation, discredited their most respectable leaders, irritated them by empty menaces, created a religious war by exerting against them all their influence over the grand juries and the Corporation of Dublin. At the same time, on the question of assisting England against France, and on the evil of the levelling principles that were abroad, Grattan spoke in no

[1] Hobart to Nepean, Jan. 11, 1793.

faltering terms. 'He condemned the spirit of disturbance'—so the Chief Secretary reported to England—'and every design to effect by violence an alteration in the Constitution. He approved of the preparatory measures taken for the security of this kingdom. He considered the decree of the French Convention generally expressed against all crowned heads, as a declaration against the King of Great Britain and Ireland, and of course as a declaration of war against those nations. . . . He admitted generally the propriety of an augmentation of the army, of an effectual militia, and of the proclamation of an embargo. . . . He spoke strongly in favour of the Roman Catholic claims, but looked upon a reform in Parliament to be the most essential measure for allaying the discontents and giving satisfaction to the nation. He expressed himself with great warmth and duty and loyalty to the King. He pointed out the happy frame of our Constitution. He urged the advantage and necessity of the connection between Great Britain and this kingdom, and reprobated in pointed terms' the principles of the French Revolution.[1] There was no division on the address, but an amendment moved by Grattan was carried unanimously. It thanked the King for having in this critical period taken 'a leading part in healing the political dissensions of his people on account of religion.' It pledged the House to take the subject thus recommended from the throne into immediate consideration, and 'at a time when doctrines pernicious to freedom and dangerous to monarchical government are propagated in foreign countries . . . to impress his Majesty's Catholic subjects with a sense of the singular and eternal obligations they owe to the throne, and to his Majesty's royal person and family.'[2]

The tone of the debate was not unhappily described by Langrishe, as 'acrimonious unanimity.' It was evident that one party was displeased at what they regarded as the sacrifice of Protestant ascendency, that another party was determined to press the question of parliamentary reform, and was likely to receive a very unexpected measure of support, that the Ministers had lost all their credit and a great part of their controlling power. It was generally felt in Parliament that they had

[1] Hobart to Nepean, Jan. 11. [2] *Parl. Deb.* xiii 30.

dangerously mismanaged affairs, that their policy had been reversed, that they had no longer the confidence of England, that they were introducing a policy which was not their own, and to the credit of which they had no just title. They were themselves in no good humour with their colleagues in England, and even the fact that the Irish Parliament was evidently quite ready to follow them in carrying a large measure of Catholic relief, must have been not a little embarrassing to statesmen who in reality detested the measure they were introducing, and who had been so long and so urgently impressing on the English Cabinet the enormous difficulties of the task. Men so acute as Pitt and Dundas can hardly have failed to detect in the letters from Ireland the true outlines of the situation.

'Concessions to the Catholics,' wrote Hobart, 'will certainly be acceded to by all parties to an extent which last year nothing could have effected, but it is perfectly understood that the concession has become irresistible from the encouragement which has been given in England and promoted by the success of the French arms and probability of war. French and levelling principles have been reprobated by every man who has spoken in the House of Commons, and every expression of loyalty conveyed in the strongest terms, by Mr. Grattan particularly, whose praises of the monarchical part of the Constitution can only be equalled by his desire to cripple the Executive Government. His object manifestly is to make it impracticable for any man to govern Ireland but himself, and until he has the House of Commons completely at his disposal he will never permit the country to be quiet. In order to effect this point he has entrapped the aristocracy into an acquiescence in the principle of reform, and he pretended to concede to them the credit and conduct of the measure. . . . Notwithstanding the loyalty which is professed to be the predominant passion of the day in Ireland, you may be assured that the intention is materially to lessen the power of the Crown, which, by a seeming acquiescence, I trust we shall be able to prevent in any great degree, but I apprehend there will be a necessity of concurring in most if not all of the Whig Club measures, Responsibility, Police, Pension, and Place Bills. The ill temper of many of our friends is not to be described.'[1]

[1] Hobart to Nepean, Jan. 16, 1793. Grattan's *Life*, iv. 85, 86.

In the House of Lords, Fitzgibbon with his usual cynical candour lost no time in expressing his sentiments. He was a leading member of an Administration which was especially charged with the task of conciliating the Catholics, and inducing the Irish Parliament to confer on them the elective franchise. In the debate on the address he immediately distinguished himself by a fierce attack on the Catholic petition to the King, and declared that 'he would cheerfully give relief to the Roman Catholics, provided it should not extend to give effective situation in the State.'[1]

It was quite evident that the policy of conciliating the Catholics without doing anything in the direction of reform could not be sustained, and the spirit of reform in the House was much stronger than might have been expected. The reader may attribute this fact as he pleases, to a factious desire to embarrass the Government, or to the wish of the independent or alienated members of the aristocracy to propose themselves as a possible Government, or to simple panic, or to the deliberate conviction of men who were well acquainted with the country, that without a speedy and a serious reform the levelling spirit in the North would inevitably lead to a great catastrophe. Whatever may be the explanation, the fact at least is certain. On January 14 William Ponsonby and Conolly, who were two of the most important members of the Irish Commons unconnected with the Government, gave notice of an intended Reform Bill, and Grattan, while strongly supporting them, moved for a committee to inquire into the abuses in the Constitution. No plan was as yet proposed, but the Chief Secretary noticed that the principle was strongly asserted, that representation should depend on property. 'The sentiments of the House,' he continued, 'in favour of reform were so universal that it was in vain to resist them, and upon the question being called for, there were not above two or three negatives, and the House did not divide.'[2] Lord Kingsborough immediately after brought in a Bill to tax absentees. 'An idea has been recently admitted,' wrote the Chief Secretary, 'into men's minds in this country, which is of all others the most injurious to English Government . . . that there is a perfect indifference in England with regard to Ireland.

[1] Hobart to Nepean, Jan. 11, 1793. [2] Ibid. Jan. 15, 1793.

. . . Be assured that unless Great Britain speedily interferes energetically with regard to Ireland, we shall have commotions of a very serious nature. . . . They are now setting up the King against the Government with a view to undermine the Constitution. It is precisely the French system, and in my opinion will produce the same consequences unless it is taken up decidedly. . . . Believe no man that would persuade you that Keogh's party, and it leads the Catholics, are not republicans.'[1]

On February 4 Hobart moved for leave to bring in his Catholic Relief Bill, and stated the nature of its provisions. It was of a kind which only a year before would have appeared utterly impossible, and which was in the most glaring opposition to all the doctrines which the Government and its partisans had of late been urging. He proposed to give Catholics the franchise both in towns and in country on exactly the same terms as Protestants; to repeal the laws which still excluded them from grand juries except when there was not a sufficient number of Protestant freeholders, and from petty juries in causes between Protestants and papists; to authorise them to endow colleges, universities, and schools, and to obtain degrees in Dublin University, and to remove any provisions of the law which might still impose disabilities upon them respecting personal property. He proposed to enable them to become magistrates, to vote for magistrates in corporations, and to carry arms, subject, however, to a property qualification. They were also, with the concurrence of the English Government, to be admitted to bear commissions in the army and navy, and with a few specified exceptions all civil offices were to be thrown open to them.

This great measure was before Parliament, with several intermissions, for rather more than five weeks. The chief arguments on both sides have been already given, but the true state and division of opinions is a question of much interest and of some difficulty. If we judged only by the letters from the Castle, we should infer that the majority of the House would gladly have conceded nothing, and there is strong reason to believe that the Irish Government, during the greater part of the time when the question was pending, made it a main object to alarm as much as possible the Ministers in England, and to induce them to

[1] Hobart to Nepean, Jan. 19, 1793.

recede from the position they had taken. On the other hand it is a simple fact that this great and complicated measure, which revolutionised the whole system of government in Ireland, and presented so many openings for attack, passed through Parliament almost entirely unmodified, and without even any serious opposition. The vital clause giving the unlimited franchise to Catholics was the most contested, and it was carried by 144 to 72. Hobart, in one of his speeches during the debates, expressly stated that he found 'little difference' in the House on the principles of the Bill, and 'no objection to going into a committee upon it.'[1] The vast preponderance of speakers were in favour of relief to Catholics, though there were grave differences as to the degree, and speakers of the highest authority represented the genuine Protestant feeling of the country as being in its favour. 'The levelling principle with which this country is threatened,' said Daly, 'has within the last three or four months drawn the Protestants and Catholics closer than I think fifty years of social intercourse would have done.'[2] Parnell, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, revealed the true sentiments of the Government when he lamented the necessity for introducing the measure, but he also expressed his belief that 'the liberality of the public mind . . . would of itself alone have totally obliterated all distinctions in twenty years, and Protestants and Roman Catholics would have coalesced, by moderate and gradual concession on one side and rational gratitude and affection on the other.'[3] John O'Neil, the representative of the great Protestant county of Antrim, and one of the most important and respected country gentlemen in the House of Commons, did not hesitate to assert that 'the claim of the Catholics was now universally admitted from one end of the kingdom to the other.'[4]

There was, however, a certain party which still openly opposed the concession of any political power to the Catholics. The most prominent, or at least the most pertinacious, member was Dr. Duigenan, the Advocate-General, an honest and able man with considerable knowledge of law and of ecclesiastical antiquity, but coarse, eccentric, quarrelsome, intolerably violent and vitu-

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 271.
[2] Ibid. 317.
[3] Ibid. 321.
[4] Ibid. 310.

perative, and much more of the type of a controversial theologian than of a secular statesman. He sprang from a very humble Catholic family, and had originally been designed for the priesthood, but he broke away from the religion of his parents and became through his whole life its most vehement and acrimonious assailant. His speeches, heavily laden with citations from Church councils and from obsolete provisions of the canon law, were ridiculed by Curran as resembling 'the unrolling of an old mummy—nothing but old bones and rotten rags,' and he never appears to have had much weight in Parliament, though his agreement with the Chancellor on the Catholic question, and his strenuous support of the Union, secured for him a large measure of official promotion. He deplored that any part of the penal code had been repealed, expressed his hope that Parliament would seriously consider the policy of re-enacting it, described the hostility between Protestants and Catholics in Ireland as necessary and perennial, and broadly stated that 'no Irish Catholic is, ever was, or ever will be a faithful, loyal subject of a British Protestant king or a Protestant Government.'[1] He was strongly supported by George Ogle, the accomplished and very popular member for the county of Wexford, who predicted that the admission of Catholics to political power would ultimately lead either to separation or to a legislative union,[2] and also by David la Touche, who in the previous session had moved the rejection of the Catholic petition and who seems still to have retained much of the old Huguenot dread of popery. La Touche was not an orator, but he spoke with the weight of a great commercial position, and of a character very eminently distinguished for its integrity and its benevolence. In the last of the Irish Parliaments no less than five members of the name sat together in the House of Commons, and his family may claim what is in truth the highest honour of which an Irish family can boast—that during many successive Governments and in a period of the most lavish corruption, it possessed great parliamentary influence, and yet passed through political life untitled and unstained.

But by far the ablest man in the House of Commons, who on this occasion opposed the Catholic claims, was the Speaker Foster. He had taken a prominent part in the preceding year in the violent

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 120, 127. [2] Ibid. 138.

movement of the grand juries against the Catholics, and his conduct on this occasion had been spoken of with much bitterness both by Grattan and Burke. His speech, however, in 1793 was certainly not a violent one. It is admirably reported, and it seems to me an almost perfect model of what parliamentary eloquence should be. It is eminently the speech of a secular statesman free from any tinge of bigotry, and with no desire to offend any class of his countrymen, and he boasted with truth, that he had steadily supported every relaxation of the penal code which secured to the Catholics religious liberty and full rights in the possession of property. Political power, however, he maintained, is a question not of right but of expediency, and he argued with a force and vividness that no other member had equalled, that the inevitable result of the admission of the Catholics to power would be the eventual ascendency of a Catholic democracy which would break down the whole existing establishment in Church and State. Like Westmorland he contended that it was only the intervention of England, that had given the question importance. He painted in strong colours the confusion and panic which it had produced, and he warned the Protestants of Ireland that if they carried Catholic emancipation, Catholic gratitude, if it existed at all, would not centre on them. It was well known, he said, that the concession did not originate in this kingdom. 'There has been a race for the Catholics, and such of you as have entered the lists have been outrun.'

The main difficulty, however, which the Government had to encounter did not come from the small party of resistance. In calculating the parliamentary forces, the Lord-Lieutenant had always counted upon the opposition of the Ponsonbys to the policy of relief. It was a family powerful from the parliamentary abilities of the two brothers who represented it, powerful from its connections and its large borough influence, and powerful from the close friendship which existed between Grattan and its leaders. As we have already seen, however, when the question of Catholic suffrage was raised in the preceding year, George Ponsonby had been opposed to Grattan, though the tone of his opposition had been very moderate. His argument had been that the Catholics were still unfit for the franchise, and that the concession of political power ought to be preceded by

an extended system of united education. He now, to the extreme indignation of Westmorland, adopted a new line of policy, but one which was not, in my opinion, really inconsistent with his previous conduct. The concession of Catholic franchise had become inevitable. The English Government had encouraged it. The Irish Government had formally committed itself to it, and the hopes of the Catholics had been raised to fever point. The Government measure was denounced by Ponsonby as mischievous alike in its nature and its design. Last session the Government had opposed the admission of Catholics to the most qualified right of suffrage, and had induced the Parliament to reject a petition in its favour. In the recess, leading officials connected with the Government had been busily employed in exciting the counties and corporations to resist the claims of the Catholics, and the party in the Corporation of Dublin which was subservient to Government influence had been urged to set the example to the whole kingdom by their manifesto for Protestant ascendency. Everything that could be done was done by those in authority to persuade the Irish Protestants that it was the determination of the Government that the Catholics should not be granted the franchise. 'But what opinion,' continued Ponsonby, 'is to be formed of the intention of that Cabinet, when the Minister in this country never once intimated the smallest intention of ceding the franchise to the Catholics—never once consulted the Protestant gentlemen of the country upon the subject until it was intimated in the speech from the throne, and followed up by the Bill of the Minister, now before the House? . . . What other conclusion can be deduced from this but that the division of the people was the object of the British Minister, who, while he was using his influence with the Protestants in public to resist the Catholic claims, was telling the Catholic in private that it was not from the generosity of a Protestant Parliament he had anything to hope, but that any favour he had to expect he must hope only through the influence of the Minister in this House?' It was the old policy of England, 'which in order to check and govern one party by another made separate interests;' which played off the Catholics against the Protestants; which was now endeavouring to form a separate Catholic interest inimical to the Pro-

testant gentry. There was but one way 'to prevent in future such things, and to cut up by the roots all the powers and all the stratagems of the British Minister for dividing the people of this country.' It was to reject the Government measure, and to carry a new Bill which would really settle the question by giving to the Catholics 'everything Parliament had to give with liberality and confidence, admitting them to a full participation to the rights of the Constitution, and thus binding their gratitude and their attachment to their Protestant fellow-subjects.' The Government measure, he argued, was not one either of finality or of real conciliation. Will the Catholic gentleman—a man of education, of ambition, perhaps of distinguished ability—acquiesce in a decision which admits the most ignorant and turbulent of his co-religionists to an equality with the Protestants in respect to the suffrage to which alone in political life they could aspire, while he is himself marked out as inferior to the Protestant gentry by his exclusion from Parliament? Nothing short of a full and equal share in the Constitution will now be sufficient. There are dangers no doubt to be feared from the abolition of all religious distinctions in Ireland, but the time has come when they must be faced. They are far less than those which would result from a policy which gave the Catholics the substance of power while it left them under the galling sense of inferiority, and which taught them to look to the English Minister and not to the Irish Parliament for future favours.[1]

To the great alarm of the Lord-Lieutenant it was evident that Ponsonby carried with him the sentiments of a large section of the House of Commons. 'The members of the Opposition,' complained the Chief Secretary, 'condemned the measure as not being conciliatory.' 'Mr. Conolly in strong terms condemned these half measures . . . and said that the Roman Catholics would not be satisfied without a total abolition of every limitation and incapacity. . . . Several gentlemen who have been in the habit of supporting Government, declared for a total abolition.' 'I cannot well express to you the general dissatisfaction and resentment that prevailed among a considerable number of the strongest friends of Government. . . . The Opposition has determined to take all the merit of the conces-

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 273–275, 327, 328.

sions from the Administration by going further than we proposed.'[1] The Duke of Leinster was on the side of Ponsonby, and 'Lord Abercorn had sent over instructions to his friends to move a grant of everything to the Catholics.'[2] Grattan, in perfect consistency with his previous career, strongly urged that the Government should complete their measure by admitting Catholics to Parliament, and the great preponderance of argument in the debates was plainly on that side.

In truth, the long agitation of O'Connell has given the admission of Catholics to Parliament an altogether factitious magnitude in the public mind. It was the culmination of a long struggle for political equality, but in real importance it was immeasurably inferior to the Irish Act of 1793, which gave the great bulk of the Irish Catholics the franchise. Catholic constituencies have never found any difficulty in obtaining Protestants to act as their instruments, and with the leverage which was now obtained they were certain to obtain the rest. One member predicted, with admirable accuracy, the event which took place in Clare in 1828. 'Suppose,' said Ormsby, 'the electors should choose a Roman Catholic and persist in returning him, as in the case of Mr. Wilkes in England, the House would then be committed with the people, a situation which he was sure they did not desire.'[3] Few greater mistakes of policy could be made than to give political equality to the great mass of ignorant Catholics, who were for the most part far below political interests, and at the same time to refuse it to the Catholic gentry. The continued disability was certain to produce renewed agitation, and it was equally certain that this agitation would be ultimately successful. The disability fell on the very class which would feel it most keenly and which deserved it least. Whatever controversy there might be about the sentiments of the mass of the Catholic peasantry or of the Catholic priesthood, there was at least no question that the few Catholic gentry of Ireland had shown themselves for generations uniformly and almost effusively loyal. The presence of ten or twenty members of this class in Parliament would have had a conciliatory effect out of all proportion to its real importance, and

[1] Hobart to Nepean, Feb. 5, 1793. [2] Cooke to Nepean, Feb. 26.
[3] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 308.

it could have had no effect but for good. 'By giving the Catholics equality of suffrage,' said Hamilton, 'with the Protestants, Parliament would invest the lower, the more numerous, and of course the less enlightened part of the Catholic community with that privilege which must in fact include every other; and yet if it went no farther it would establish an exclusion which, even if it were desirable, must be but temporary and ineffectual, against the higher and more enlightened order, against those men who had the deepest stake in the country, and who from every motive of interest and ambition must be pledged, as much as they were themselves, for its prosperity and advantage.' 'I should be sorry,' added the same speaker, 'if the disseminators of sedition should have it in their power to tell the people that Parliament had not followed the example of their constituents, who had generously offered the participation of their rights to their fellow-subjects of every description, while their representatives persisted in retaining an exclusive monopoly. . . . Every motive of expediency and wisdom suggested to the House that this was the moment when every distinction should be done away.'[1]

These appear to me to have been words of wisdom, and there was another argument which was not less weighty. As I have already shown, Grattan had always foreseen that by far the greatest danger which the peculiar circumstances of Ireland foreshadowed, was that the ignorant and excitable Catholic population might be one day detached from the influence of property and respectability, and might become a prey to designing agitators and demagogues. By giving full political power to the Catholic democracy, and at the same time withholding political power and influence from the Catholic gentry, the legislation of 1793 materially hastened this calamity, and it was in the long popular agitation for Catholic emancipation that the foundation was laid for the political anarchy of our own day.

The question whether Catholic emancipation might have been completely carried in 1793 is not one that can be answered with perfect confidence, but I have myself little doubt that if the great influence of the Government had been exerted in its favour, it was perfectly feasible. The Irish Government, however,

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 314, 315.

hated all concessions to the Catholics, and dreaded above all things the inclination of the English Ministers in their favour. The English Ministers were told that the Opposition in advocating the final abolition of political distinctions was actuated by merely factious motives; that the party in its favour was really small, though resentment and desperation had made it important; that if the Government attempted to go further their followers would revolt against them, and defeat them; that the Catholics were fully satisfied with the Government measure.[1] Pitt and Dundas had no wish to renew their long controversy with their representatives in Ireland, or to raise unnecessarily a new Irish question at a time when they were just entering upon a European war. It is worthy, however, of notice that while the great independent interests in Parliament had committed themselves to the principle of admitting the Catholics to Parliament, there was absolutely no sign of opposition or indignation in the country, and the tone of the debates appears clearly to show that the proposition had excited very little serious hostility. A motion to introduce into the Government Bill a clause admitting Catholics to Parliament was proposed by Mr. George Knox and seconded by Major Doyle, who claimed to have been the earliest advocate in Parliament of complete emancipation.[2] The speech of the mover was remarkably sensible and moderate. He advocated his motion as intended to set at rest a dangerous and difficult question; as the necessary corollary of the measures which enabled Catholics to purchase landed property, and gave them the suffrage; as an eminently conservative measure which would give the property and education in the Catholic body an increase of political importance corresponding to that which was given to ignorance and numbers. The whole weight of the Government, however, was thrown against him, and he was defeated by 163 to 69. It is a remarkable fact that the future Duke of Wellington was put forward by the Government as the chief opponent of the motion. 'He had no objection,' he said, 'to giving Roman Catholics the benefits of the Constitution, and in his opinion the Bill conferred them in an ample degree; but the motion of the honourable

[1] Cooke to Nepean, Feb. 26; Hobart to Nepean, Feb. 26, 1793.

[2] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 278. See, too, Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 145.

gentleman seemed calculated to promote disunion. With the Bill as it stands the Protestants are satisfied, and the Roman Catholics contented. Why then agitate a question which may disturb both?'[1]

It would be curious to know whether Wellington remembered this speech in 1829, when the unsettled question of Catholic emancipation had brought Ireland to the verge of civil war, when the agitation it aroused had ranged the main body of the Irish Catholics under the guidance of demagogues and priests, and had given a death-blow to the political influence of the landlords over their tenantry, and when he was himself obliged to set the fatal example of yielding to the fear of rebellion a measure which he had pledged himself to oppose. If the Catholic question had been settled in 1793, the whole subsequent history of Ireland would probably have been changed. The rebellion of 1798 would almost certainly either never have taken place, or have been confined to an insignificant disturbance in the North, and the social and political convulsions which were produced by the agitations of the present century might have been wholly or in a great measure averted.

In addition to the policies I have already described, there was another policy advocated in the Irish Parliament with extraordinary ability by Sir Lawrence Parsons. His great speech on the Catholic question in 1793 is exceedingly valuable to students of Irish history, and especially to those who, like the present writer, are making it their main task to reproduce as far as possible the modes of thought, feeling, and reasoning prevailing among the different classes of Irishmen. In the eyes of every true statesman, he said, it was evident that the question of the extension of privileges to the Catholics, and the question of parliamentary reform, were intimately connected. 'The extent of what you give to the Catholics depends upon the reform, and the effect of the reform depends upon the extent of franchise you give to the Catholics.' The country cannot prosper as long as it continues in the present state of fermentation on these two questions, until something is done on both of them which will content reasonable and moderate men, and

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 313.

give the Government a weight of authority that will enable it to repress sedition.

The position of the Catholics in Ireland had been determined by the events that followed the Revolution and by the penal code. It is a dark page of Irish history, and one on which he would gladly throw a veil; but, like Charlemont and like his great master Flood,[1] Parsons refused to subscribe to the ordinary condemnation of the Irish statesmen of the early part of the century. 'If a spirit of intolerance is imputable to them, it is a hundred times more imputable to their great and enlightened neighbours in England and France, not to mention all the other kingdoms of Europe in which, till the other day, the most barbarous persecutions on account of religion were practised.' The measures of Lewis XIV. against the French Protestants, and the English laws after the Revolution against the English Catholics, were more severe than any in Ireland, and they had not the same excuse. The French Protestants and the English Catholics were far too weak to be a serious danger to the State. 'In Ireland the powers were nearly equal, and therefore what in France and England was persecution, in Ireland was policy.' Considering how formidable the Irish Catholics were from their numbers, and from their connection with France and with the Stuarts, it would have been impossible to have preserved the settlement of the Revolution, and to have secured Ireland from a renewed civil war, if the Catholics had not been proscribed and reduced to impotence. No one could justify all parts of the penal code, but in as far as it was a code of political in-

[1] It is worthy of notice that Parsons—who was himself a man of very distinguished ability—evidently considered Flood by far the greatest man who had appeared in Irish politics in the latter part of the eighteenth century. In a little work published in 1795, he says of him: 'He was certainly one of the greatest men that ever adorned this country. His mind was the most capacious, his reason the most athletic, his judgment the most balanced, his erudition the most profound. His nature was too dignified to deceive others, his intellect too piercing to be deceived himself. . . . The impartial judgment of subsequent ages will consider him as unrivalled in his own country, and had it been his fortune to have moved upon a theatre as capacious as his own mind, his celebrity would not have been exceeded by any man's in any other.' Parsons' *Observations on the Bequest of Henry Flood*, pp. 65, 75. This agrees with the judgment of another very able man, Peter Burrowes, who was an intimate friend both of Flood and of Grattan. Burrowes described the former as 'perhaps the ablest man Ireland ever produced, indisputably the ablest man of his own times.' *Memoir and Speeches of Peter Burrowes*, p. 11.

capacities—and the greater part of it was directly or indirectly intended for that end—it was unavoidable.

It was plain, however, that the time had come for its final abolition. 'To give some participation of franchise to the Roman Catholics is no longer a matter of choice, but of the most urgent and irresistible policy.' The great question, however, was on what terms that franchise should be given. Parsons strongly maintained that the elective franchise should be given to no Catholic who had not a freehold of twenty pounds a year, and that it should be accompanied by the admission of the Catholics into Parliament. Anticipating very closely the judgment which was expressed many years later by Sir Robert Peel,[1] he pronounced it to be an act of infatuation, approaching to madness, to confer the franchise on almost the whole pauper tenantry of Ireland by annexing it to every forty-shilling freehold. 'In England,' he said, 'the lands are mostly let from year to year, or for seven years, or sometimes fourteen years, or sometimes and more rarely for twenty-one years, but leases for lives are seldom granted. Consequently the rabble of the people there cannot obtain freehold property—nay, a great majority of the middle classes cannot obtain it. I have heard it stated by a very accurate and well-informed man that the number of county electors in England was but 100,000. . . . Here the tenures are quite different; almost all the lands of the country are let for lives, so that almost every peasant has a freehold tenure, and, if not disqualified by religion, a vote. See then the effect of this upon the present question. All the Catholic peasantry will be admitted to vote.' The recent great increase of tillage immensely aggravated the danger. 'Those large farms which a few years ago were all in pasture grounds, each occupied by a single Protestant farmer, are now broken into several parcels, tenanted for the most part by Catholic husbandmen, so that seven or eight Catholics hold the ground at present which one Protestant held formerly. Will not most of these be voters? Consider this also. Land has risen within five or six years one-fourth in its value. Land which six years ago you could not let for more than twenty shillings an acre you can now let for twenty-five shillings an acre. What follows? The Catholic

[1] See Peel's *Memoirs*, i. 4.

who had his land but six years ago for the extremity of its value, has it now for one-fourth less than its value; therefore he must hold a very small quantity who has not a profit to qualify him to vote. . . . Consider further that this increase of tillage and rise of land have principally been since Catholics were allowed to take freehold leases, and then consider how three provinces of this kingdom are covered with Catholics; and can you doubt of the multitude of Catholic voters, should you extend to them the forty-shilling franchise?' In three provinces out of four the Catholics are believed to be six times as numerous as the Protestants. Making then the amplest deduction on account of Catholic poverty and Protestant landlords, of pride and prejudice and every other motive that can be assigned, it is certain that the immense majority of county voters in at least three provinces will be the most ignorant Catholics. Landlords themselves, wishing to increase their own consequence, will be certain almost everywhere to convert leases for years into leases for lives, and thus the Catholic preponderance will be immense and overwhelming.

'If they had all been Protestants for fifty generations back, I would not consent to the overwhelming of the Constitution by such a torrent. In some counties where there are but 2,000 electors now, you will, if this Bill passes, have 10,000; in others 20,000; in others 30,000; and I am well informed in the county of Cork alone you will have 50,000; that is, half of what I have stated the whole elective body to be of all the counties in England.'

'Do you think,' he asked, 'you will meliorate the Constitution by admitting into it such a copious adulteration of rabble as this? I do not now desire you to consider them as differing from you in religion, but merely their poverty, their numbers, their ignorance, their barbarous ignorance, many of them not being able even to speak our language, and then think whether giving them the franchise will not be a most pernicious vitiation of the Constitution. The county representation is now reckoned the sound part of the Constitution; but where will be its soundness with such a constituency?'

It is not possible, however, to consider the question putting religion aside. 'By granting franchise to the inferior Catholics,

you give it to a body of men in great poverty, in great ignorance, bigoted to their sect and their altars, repelled by ancient prejudices from you, and at least four times as numerous as you are. You give them all at once the elective franchise, by which they will in nearly every county in three provinces out of four, be the majority of electors, controlling you, overwhelming you, resisting and irresistible. I cannot conceive a frenzy much greater than this. Allow them every virtue that elevates man—still this is a trial that no body of men that are, or ever were, should be put to. I think as well of the Catholics as I do of any body of men in this country, but still I would not trust so much to any body of men in such circumstances; not to the Protestants to whom I belong; not to the Dissenters whom I highly respect. I can only consider the Catholics as men, and they must be more than men if, in such a situation, they could be safely entrusted with such a power.'

It was replied that the landlords are in Ireland omnipotent with the small tenants, and that they will continue, as at present, to return the county representatives. If this be so, it is not easy to see what good the extension of the franchise will do to the Catholics; but is it certain, is it probable, that this state of things will continue? 'Suppose you gave the inferior Catholics franchise, and that they should meet in all their parishes to determine on the exercise of it, as they lately did to determine on the attainment of it; and that they should nominate in their chapels their representatives in Parliament as they lately did their delegates to the Convention; what would there be to stop them? The power of their landlords might do much, but the power of religion might do much more. How much might these people be wrought upon by their priests at their altars, working upon their superstition and poverty? How easily might they be persuaded that their temporal as well as their eternal felicity depended upon their uniting together in the exercise of their franchise. I do not say that all this would follow, but I say that all this and more might follow, and therefore that we should not wantonly risk it.'

Suppose, however, that the parliamentary reform which public opinion so urgently demands is obtained. It would almost certainly take the form of throwing by far the greatest part of the

borough representation into the counties, collectively or divisionally. The small Catholic voters would thus inevitably command almost the entire representation in three provinces, and probably in some counties of the fourth. What use under such circumstances would be the exclusion of Catholics from Parliament? 'Do you think they could long want candidates even among Protestants, or nominal Protestants, fit for their purpose? Could they not easily get in every county enough of candidates who would offer to take their tests and promise to obey them, and the first object of their mission to Parliament would be to repeal those oaths which you now take at that table, and admit the Catholics to sit here indiscriminately? Such would be the representatives of three provinces out of four in the next Parliament. What then would be the representatives in the Parliament the next after? Would they have even the name or semblance of Protestants?' What chance would a Catholic candidate have before a constituency which was wholly or by a great majority Protestant? Assuming only that the most ignorant and bigoted Catholics in Ireland are not less under the influence of religious prejudice than the Protestants, it will follow that in a very short time the great majority in the House of Commons would be Catholic. 'Is there anything unreasonable in this supposition?'

Those who regard a Catholic revolt against Protestant proprietors as impossible or improbable, forget how easily it might be accomplished, and what overwhelming inducements, after the Government measure, designing men would have to produce it. Under our Constitution, the majority in the House of Commons controls all the powers of the State. All the wealth, all the greatness of the land, is at its mercy. Intriguing and ambitious men had only to make the Catholic voters conscious of their power, and to persuade them to choose their representatives for Parliament in their chapels, as they had already chosen their representatives for the Convention, and the work would be done, and the power of the landlords annihilated. Topics of agitation will never be wanting. 'They may talk to them of tithes and even of rents, and at last proceed to talk to them of religion, and tell them: "If you will unite in your suffrage, your ancient religion, which has been prostrated in the dust for a century, and humiliated and reviled, may once more raise its

head and appear in all its pristine magnificence." . . . Will you transfer such a power to men who are subject to such an influence? Will you be your own executioners and commit this desperate suicide?'

It was said that any special limitation imposed on Catholic voters would rob the measure of its grace, but was this so certain? Most Catholics of substance and intelligence, most of those who took any real interest in politics, are quite as well aware as the Protestants that the small tenantry of Ireland are unfit for political power, and they would welcome any clause that excluded them. 'I seldom knew a Protestant ten-pound freeholder who did not wish that Protestant forty-shilling freeholders should not vote, and for the same reason I am persuaded the middle Catholics will be better pleased that the inferior ones should not have votes.' 'Every information I have been able to procure from those counties where they most abound, confirms me in this sentiment.' The Catholic franchise ought, therefore, to be confined to the upper class and to the large farmers, an intelligent and respectable body, sufficiently numerous to become a considerable political influence in Irish life, but too few to be any serious danger to the Protestants. But at the same time, the seats in Parliament ought most certainly to be thrown open to Catholics. Such a measure would be in the highest degree gratifying to the upper order among them. It would strike the Catholic imagination, and be far more really popular than the enfranchisement of an ignorant tenantry, and it would be completely without danger as long as the main part of the constituency continues Protestant. 'I should not be sorry to see a respectable Catholic sitting here on my right hand and another on my left, provided that by keeping the strength of the constituency Protestant, we did not endanger ourselves by the admission of too many of them. A Catholic House of Commons will never spring out of a Protestant root. But if the root be Catholic no man can be sure how long the stem and branches will continue Protestant.'

The Government were alarmed at the levelling principles advocated in the North, and at the proposed alliance between Catholics and Dissenters; and they imagined that they would conciliate the former and prevent the alliance, by creating a democratic Catholic franchise. No calculation could be more

infatuated. The Chief Secretary had been unable to adduce a single declaration to that effect from any Catholic leader, and if he had been able to adduce such a declaration it would be worthless. By the irresistible force of circumstances, by the stress of the most obvious and incontestable interest, the Catholics when they obtained the forty-shilling franchise would sooner or later be joined with the Dissenters in advocating a Reform Bill as levelling and democratic as possible. They probably did not possess more than a fiftieth part of the property of the kingdom, but if the borough constituencies were thrown into the counties, they would with their new franchise nominate three-quarters of the members of the House of Commons. 'This extensive franchise, therefore, instead of making the Catholics contented, and preventing them from uniting with the Dissenters, is the very measure which will make it the interest of the Catholics to press for a reform, and how few here do not know how interest overrules the actions of men?'

'In short there never was a measure pretending to be a great one more narrowly conceived than the present Bill. It courts the Catholic rabble and insults the Catholic gentry. It gives power to those who are ignorant, and therefore dangerous, and withholds it from those who are enlightened and therefore safe. It gives equal power with the Protestants to the lower class of Catholics, who are the most numerous, and thereby gives them a superiority, and it does not give equal powers to the upper class, who are less numerous than you, and who could therefore have had no superiority; that is, it does the very reverse of what it ought to do.'

Turning to another aspect of the subject, Parsons contended that it was quite clear there were two questions to be settled—a Protestant question, which was reform, and a Catholic question, which was emancipation—and that unless both questions were settled on a wise and moderate basis, Ireland never could be at peace. There was great reason, he said, to believe that the Government were pursuing a plan of dividing the different sections of the Irish people, and that their object in carrying the Catholic question was to obtain the means of maintaining the present system of parliamentary influence intact. Such a policy was sure to lead to a long train of calamities, and it was of the first

importance to the future welfare of Ireland that it should be defeated. He proposed, therefore, that the Catholic franchise should be taken out of the present Bill and made part of a measure of parliamentary reform, to which it properly belonged, and that the other concessions should be carried at once. This would no doubt adjourn the settlement of the Catholic franchise to the next year, but this postponement would be of no real consequence, for no general election was imminent, and it would have the great advantage of securing the simultaneous triumph of both questions. 'Should a Minister say, Let us divide the people of Ireland, let us gratify a part and disappoint a part, by uniting the measures you defeat this ruinous policy. You force him either to reject all, which he dare not, or to admit all, and thus all parties succeed. You join the reform with a measure already recommended from the throne. . . . You conciliate the minds of many Protestants to the Catholic franchise by thus embodying it with an act in favour of their own freedom, and you at once excite the whole people of Ireland from its shores to its centre in a universal demand for this great charter of public liberty. I would therefore begin by giving but a limited franchise to the Catholics, and by making but a moderate reform, and I would unite these measures. A sudden communication of power to a great body of people is never wise. Changes in an ancient Constitution ought to be gradual.'

He very earnestly protests that he is actuated by no spirit of hostility to the Catholics and by no wish to defeat their aspirations for the franchise. 'Whatever I think can be safely granted to the Catholics I will grant. Whatever I think cannot I will endeavour to withhold and I will say so. . . . Every respectable and candid man among them, at least when the fever of the present instant is past, will respect me for speaking my sentiments boldly.' It would not be wise and it would not be honourable for the Catholics 'neglecting their Protestant and Dissenting auxiliaries to insist in this critical juncture on a separate treaty for themselves,' and it certainly would not be wise in a Protestant Parliament to support such a policy. 'The reason I would combine these two measures is not to defeat Catholic franchise but to secure parliamentary reform.' The House of Commons may pass a Reform Bill, but if it be disliked

by the Government and supported only by a small section of the Irish people it will perish in the House of Lords or before the throne. Nothing can secure its triumph but the irresistible force of a nation's will. 'The heart of the Catholics is now in the franchise, I would therefore put it into the body of the reform.' 'Unite the nation by uniting these measures, and proceed boldly and fearlessly like men in the great cause of a great and united people. . . . Neglect no human means of strengthening the reform. Move it discreetly but rapidly forward. Put Catholic franchise into its bosom, and let it move on to the Lords and to the throne followed by the votive acclamations of the whole people.'[1]

These extracts are very long, but they will not, I hope, prove uninteresting or uninstructive to my readers, and they are an excellent specimen of the debates of an assembly which has been greatly underrated and misrepresented. If the question had been decided by reason alone, the policy of Parsons appears to me to have been that which was most likely to have solved the great difficulty of making the Irish Government, without a convulsion, really constitutional. The restricted suffrage had been fully acquiesced in by the Catholic leaders in 1792, and if the Government thought it right to enlarge the scheme which had been rejected in that year, their wisest course would probably have been to reintroduce the former measure with an additional clause admitting Catholics to Parliament. Of the motives which induced them to adopt a different plan it is not possible to speak with complete certainty, but there is one consideration, at least, which will not escape the reader. Parsons desired to carry both Catholic enfranchisement and reform. The Government were anxious above all things to avert the latter. Secondary measures of reform, indeed, they were now prepared to admit as unavoidable, but they made it their capital object to maintain the keystone of the existing parliamentary system, the preponderance of nomination boroughs which placed the control of the House of Commons in a very few hands. At the outbreak of a great war and at a time when the events of France had produced a sudden and wholly unprecedented demo-

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 203–219.

cratic spirit in the community, this policy was peculiarly difficult, and whatever might be the ultimate effects, the Catholic Bill was for a time very favourable to it. It was likely to sever the Catholics at least temporarily from the Dissenters. The forty-shilling freeholders, whatever they might hereafter become, were at present absolutely subservient to their landlords, and they continued to be so till the great excitement of 1828. Nor had they as yet the overwhelming numerical preponderance which might be inferred from the speech of Parsons, though by the increase of population, the division of tenancies, and the competition of landlords for political power, they speedily attained it. The Ministers might reasonably hope that for a time they had baffled the reformers, divided their ranks, and surmounted a crisis of great and pressing difficulty. If their thoughts travelled further they may have calculated that by making the county constituencies mainly Catholic they would give the Protestants a new and powerful reason for supporting the borough system, would make an extended Reform Bill both difficult and dangerous, and would perhaps produce a social and political condition which might one day lead to a legislative union.

The question of Catholic franchise was a very difficult one, owing to the fact that the Protestants already possessed the forty-shilling freehold franchise. At a time when all political power was in the hands of a small section of the Irish people, and when Ireland was especially suffering from the evils of extreme monopoly, a democratic Protestant suffrage in the counties was not altogether incapable of defence. It corresponded in some measure to the democratic scot and lot franchise, which existed in some of the English towns before the Reform Bill of 1832. But on the whole it was quite clear that the great mass of the forty-shilling freeholders out of Ulster were utterly unfit for political power; and in a country where the difficulties of government were unusually great, it would be a grave calamity if this class of men became the source or foundation of all political power. In several speeches made during the debates this danger was clearly recognised, and by no one more clearly than by Forbes, who was one of the ablest and most consistent of the reformers. Forbes maintained, however, that the evil of withholding the franchise from the

Catholic forty-shilling freeholder, while it was conceded to his Protestant neighbour, would be still greater; that it would prevent the political union and amalgamation of creeds, which was the first object of the measure; that it would embody the excluded Catholics for the purpose of destroying the limitation, and that 'nothing was so dangerous in a State as an unequal distribution of constitutional privileges.'[1] There was, it is true, another alternative, which was suggested by Hely Hutchinson, who said that, 'to prevent the influx of small freeholders and any disparity between Protestants and Catholics, he would wish that ten-pound freeholds were made indispensable to voters of all persuasions.' A clause to this effect was actually proposed by Graydon, but withdrawn at the joint request of Hobart and Grattan.[2] It was indeed plainly impracticable. A period in which the democratic and levelling spirit ran so high was not one in which a great measure of disfranchisement could be safely carried. The policy of uniting the Protestants and Catholics would certainly not succeed, if the admission of Catholics to the Constitution was purchased by the disfranchisement of the majority of Protestant voters, and a large part of the Protestant forty-shilling freeholders in the North were not mainly employed in agriculture, and were eminently fitted for the franchise. 'Gentlemen talk of prohibiting forty-shilling freeholders from voting,' said Foster; 'they will not attempt so wild a project when they consider it. What! to disfranchise nearly two-thirds of all the Protestants! to disfranchise those persons who sent them into this House! The law in their favour had existed since Henry VI., and now forms a principle of the Constitution. Did the gentlemen who lived in the North recollect that this would disfranchise all their manufacturers? . . . Did they wish to force manufacturers to look for ten-pound freeholds? They would be spoiled as manufacturers, and would be miserable farmers. The weaver, with his little piece of land and his garden, is generally a forty-shilling freeholder; he is a useful member, a good voter, and a good subject, and on such men as him may the safety of the Constitution often depend.'[3]

These arguments were very powerful, and the Government

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 258–268. [2] Ibid. xiii. 299, 300.
[3] Ibid. xiii. 312.

scheme of extending the franchise to Catholic forty-shilling freeholders, and at the same time excluding Catholics from Parliament, was carried in its integrity. In one of his last speeches on the question, Hobart said that 'the principle of the Bill was not to admit Roman Catholics to the State,' but many who supported the Government must have agreed with Grattan that 'he must be a visionary politician who could imagine that, after what the Bill granted to the Catholics, they could long be kept out of the State,'[1] and at least one prominent member looked still further. 'I do not deprecate the day,' said Bushe, 'when we may grant the Catholics a full participation of power; but if we should do so, that measure should be accompanied by another —a satisfactory ecclesiastical establishment, paid out of the Treasury, and no such measure is now proposed. For it is idle to say we should have nothing left to contend for if we gave them seats in Parliament.'[2]

Few things in Irish parliamentary history are more remarkable than the facility with which this great measure was carried, though it was in all its aspects thoroughly debated. It passed its second reading in the House of Commons with only a single negative. It was committed with only three negatives, and in the critical divisions on its clauses the majorities were at least two to one. The qualification required to authorise a Catholic to bear arms was raised in committee on the motion of the Chancellor, and in addition to the oath of allegiance of 1774, a new oath was incorporated in the Bill, copied from one of the declarations of the Catholics, and abjuring certain tenets which had been ascribed to them, among others the assertion that the infallibility of the Pope was an article of their faith. For the rest the Bill became law almost exactly in the form in which it was originally designed. It swept away the few remaining disabilities relating to property which grew out of the penal code. It enabled Catholics to vote like Protestants for members of Parliament and magistrates in cities or boroughs; to become elected members of all corporations except Trinity College; to keep arms subject to some specified conditions; to hold all civil and military offices in the kingdom from which they were not specifically excluded; to hold the medical professorships on the

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 363. [2] Ibid. 318.

foundation of Sir Patrick Dun; to take degrees and hold offices in any mixed college connected with the University of Dublin that might hereafter be founded. It also threw open to them the degrees of the University, enabling the King to alter its statutes to that effect. A long clause enumerated the prizes which were still withheld. Catholics might not sit in either House of Parliament; they were excluded from almost all Government and judicial positions; they could not be Privy Councillors, King's Counsel, Fellows of Trinity College, sheriffs or sub-sheriffs, or generals of the staff.[1] Nearly every post of ambition was still reserved for Protestants, and the restrictions weighed most heavily on the Catholics who were most educated and most able.

In the House of Lords as in the House of Commons the Bill passed with little open opposition, but a protest, signed among other peers by Charlemont, was drawn up against it. Dickson, the Bishop of Down, and Law, the Bishop of Elphin, were conspicuous among the advocates of the measure, while Agar, the Archbishop of Cashel, spoke strongly against it. The most remarkable part, however, was that taken by Lord Fitzgibbon the Chancellor. As we have seen by the correspondence of the Government, he was from the beginning bitterly opposed to any concession to the Catholics, and he was not a man accustomed to veil or attenuate his sentiments. His natural and proper course would have been to resign his office when the policy which he had advocated as of vital importance was overthrown. He determined, however, to remain in office and to vote for the Catholic Bill, while he at the same time did the utmost in his power to deprive it of all its conciliatory effect. At the very opening of the session in which it was to be the supreme object of the Government to secure the loyalty and co-operation of the Catholics, he had, as we have seen, distinguished himself by a fierce attack upon their address to the King, and on March 13, when the Relief Bill had almost attained its last stage, he delivered his sentiments at length in a speech which was afterwards published, and which throws a singularly vivid light upon his opinions, his character, and his temper.

It was an able speech, but less able, I think, than the

[1] 33 Geo. III. c. 21.

speeches of Parsons and Foster, and in its tone of thought and method of reasoning it corresponded closely with those which Duigenan, and Duigenan alone, was accustomed to make in the House of Commons. He began with a characteristically arrogant attack upon Bishop Law, who had spoken with much liberality in favour of the Catholics. He could not, he said, remain silent when 'the epidemical frenzy of the time' had reached even the right reverend bench. He could not leave 'unnoticed and unreprehended' the 'indiscretions' of the Bishop —indiscretions which could only be excused by a 'radical ignorance of the laws of the country from whence he has come, and of the history, the laws, and the Constitution of that country into which he has been transplanted.' For his own part he had not 'a spark of religious bigotry' in his composition, nor did he speak in opposition to the measure. 'I should be extremely sorry,' he said, 'if anything which may fall from me were to stop the progress of this Bill. I do believe after what has passed upon this subject in Great Britain and Ireland, it may be essential to the momentary peace of the country that your lordships should agree to it. I do not desire to be responsible for the consequences which might follow its rejection, much as I disapprove of its principle. . . . Whatever I say is intended only to open the eyes of the people . . . if possible, to stop the further progress of innovation.'

He lays it down as a broad principle that as long as the claims of the Pope to universal spiritual dominion are maintained, 'it is utterly impossible that any man who admits them can exercise the legislative powers of a Protestant State with temper and justice.' In discussing the political claims of Roman Catholics 'we ought only to look to the principles of that religion which they profess,' and 'the page of history does not furnish a single instance in which Protestants and papists have agreed in exercising the political powers of the same State.' It follows then that the whole Catholic population of Ireland, by virtue of their religious belief, should be absolutely and for ever excluded from all share of political power. They are 'as jealously and superstitiously devoted to the popish faith as the people of Spain, Portugal, or any of the most bigoted districts of the German Empire. . . . There is not a country in

Europe in which the reformed religion has been established, where its progress has been so slow and inconsiderable as in Ireland. . . . There now is, and always has been, a constant correspondence and communication kept up between this country and the Court of Rome, and the spiritual power of the Pope is at this day acknowledged as implicitly as it ever was at any period of Irish history.'

He gives a summary and highly characteristic sketch of the past history of Ireland. Omitting altogether all the troubles that had preceded the Reformation, he compendiously dismisses every disturbance that had occurred since that period as exclusively due to 'the religious bigotry' of papists. The struggle of Tyrone against Elizabeth, the great rebellion which was produced in 1641 chiefly by the confiscations in Ulster, the conduct of the Irish at the Revolution in adhering to James II., who had given them no cause whatever for rejecting him—all these were due to 'religious bigotry.' On the penal laws he of course looks back with absolute and unqualified approval. They had, it is true, one disadvantage—one single disadvantage—they lowered the value of landed property in Ireland; but they were essential to the security of the titles of the owners. 'The people of this country consisted of two distinct and separate castes, the one with a short intermission in possession of the whole property and power of the country, the other expelled from both in consequence of unremitted and inveterate rebellion and resistance to English Government and English connection; the one acknowledging the powers civil and ecclesiastical entrusted to the Crown by the Constitution, the other obstinately disclaiming all ecclesiastical obedience to their lawful Sovereign, and acknowledging an unlimited ecclesiastical jurisdiction and authority in a foreign prince.' The Protestants were 'an English colony settled in an enemies' country,' 'the natives of the country had contracted a rooted and incurable aversion to them.' The obvious policy, the vital interest of 'that body of people in whom the power and property of the nation had centred,' was to remain strictly united among themselves and closely connected with England, and to guard jealously every avenue of political power from encroachments by papists.

For a long time this policy had been successfully pursued,

and to the 'old popery laws which disabled the native Irish from embarrassing British Government or renewing hostility against the British settlers,' Ireland stands indebted in a great measure for her internal tranquillity during the last century. The root of all our present troubles lay in 'the fatal infatuation' of 1782. Not until Irish patriots began to put forward claims of legislative independence as against England, and to divide the Protestants of Ireland, was any claim to political power advanced by the Irish papists. But since that time the popish pretensions had grown apace. The most respectable members of the religion had been thrown aside, and a popish National Assembly, imitated from that of France, had been convened in the metropolis, and it is now exercising 'a complete system of democratic government over all the Catholics of Ireland.' 'The Bill now upon the table,' he continued, 'has been backed by authority, and is now by authority presented to us as a demand of right, by a great majority of the people . . . to be admitted to a full participation of the political powers of the State. . . . If the principle is once yielded, in my opinion it goes directly to the subversion of all civilised government. . . . If papists have a right to vote for representatives in a Protestant Parliament, they have a right to sit in Parliament—they have a right to fill every office of the State—they have a right to pay tithes exclusively to their own clergy—they have a right to restore the ancient pomp and splendour of their religion—they have a right to be governed exclusively by the laws of their own Church—they have a right to seat their bishops in this House—they have a right to seat a popish prince on the throne—they have a right to subvert the established Government and to make this a popish country, which I have little doubt is their ultimate object, and therefore, if I were to look only to the manner in which this Bill has been brought forward, in my judgment we are about to establish a fatal precedent in assenting to it.'

Can it then be justified on the ground of policy? On this point he entered into a long disquisition, which I shall spare my readers, upon the nature of the papal authority, the decrees of the Lateran Council and the Council of Constance about heretics, the claims of the Church to exercise jurisdiction over the marriages of its members, the canonical obedience which every

ecclesiastic in Ireland owes to the Pope, and he concluded that it was idle to expect that papists could ever be cordially attached to any Government that was not connected with the popish religion. The measure, too, was advocated as one step towards breaking down the existing system of parliamentary government in Ireland 'by opening the right of representation to the mass of the people of all descriptions and of all religions, and one great objection to the Bill on the table is that it recognises in a great measure this most pernicious principle.' It is a principle which must necessarily lead either to simple anarchy or to a purely democratic Government. 'The advocates for an independent House of Commons have two striking examples before them. In the last century England was blest with an independent House of Commons, a great majority of them professed reformers and patriots by trade. What was the consequence? They murdered their King, they subverted the Church, they annihilated the peerage, and under the specious name of a republic erected a tyranny the most intolerable that ever oppressed a people who had been free. France is now blessed with an independent Representative Assembly, all of them professed reformers and patriots by trade, and . . . they have reduced that once great and flourishing kingdom to a state of frantic and savage despotism, unexampled in the annals of the civilised world.'

In Ireland any attempt to throw open the Parliament would be at least as fatal, and England can never consent to it. 'Great Britain must maintain her connection with Ireland, and she can maintain it only by maintaining and supporting the old English interest here. She must look for support in Ireland by maintaining and defending the descendants of the old English settlers, who, with a very few exceptions, constitute the Protestant interest in this country; and they must know and feel that they can maintain their present situation only by a close adherence to Great Britain. . . . The descendants of the old Irish, who constitute the Catholic interest of Ireland, know and feel that they can never recover the situation which their ancestors held in Ireland but by separation from Great Britain, and therefore if any man in Great Britain or Ireland is so wild as to hope that, by communicating political power also to the Catholics of

Ireland, they are to be conciliated to British interests, he will find himself bitterly mistaken. Great Britain can never conciliate the descendants of the old Irish to her interests upon any other terms than by restoring to them the possessions and the religion of their ancestors in its full splendour and dominion. Either is impracticable; for I consider a repeal of the Act of Supremacy in any of the hereditary dominions of the Crown of Great Britain, to be as much beyond the power of Parliament, as a repeal of the Great Charter or a repeal of the Bill of Rights.'

The fever of democracy is now spreading far and wide. 'The Puritans of the North, availing themselves of the example of their Catholic brethren, have already formed a provincial convention, and intend to form a general national convention . . . in order to force a dissolution of the House of Commons as now constituted, and to form a pure democratic representation of the people without distinction. . . . Public and private credit has been blasted; trade and agriculture are at a stand; a general despondency and alarm pervade the country, and in my mind there never was a period at which there existed more serious cause for alarm.' 'The people appear to have been seized with a general infatuation,' and all the signs which Lord Clarendon described as foreshadowing in England the convulsions of 1641 may be abundantly descried. If they are not checked, 'we shall be driven to sue for a Union with the Parliament of England, as the last resource for the preservation of Ireland, and the misery is that every step which we advance in innovation, as it increases the necessity for a Union, will increase the difficulties in adjusting it.'

The reader will probably wonder how an orator who spoke in such a strain could bring himself to vote in favour of the Bill. His peroration, however, describes his position with clearness, frankness, and eloquence. 'I must again,' he said, 'declare that I consider the Bill to be a most indiscreet and precipitate experiment. I consider it to be in principle unwise and pernicious, and even if it were unexceptionable in principle, when I look back to the manner in which it has been brought before Parliament, in my opinion by assenting to it we shall establish a precedent fatal to all legitimate authority. But however deeply these considerations are impressed upon my mind, I will not

divide the House upon the question of committing this Bill, because after what has passed upon the subject in Great Britain and Ireland, I will not *now* be responsible for the immediate consequences of rejecting altogether the wild claims which have been advanced in behalf of the Irish Roman Catholics. If the measure which has been brought forward shall prove successful in uniting men of all religious persuasions in sentiment, in support of the Constitution, it is fit that its authors and promoters should have the full and exclusive merit resulting from it. If on the contrary it shall prove a source of new difficulties and embarrassments in the government of this country, it is fit that they, and they only, should be responsible for the issue.'

It is easy to conceive what must have been the effect upon the Catholic population of Ireland of such a speech, made at such a moment, by one of the most powerful and trusted members of the Government of Ireland. It is not less easy to understand how inevitably a policy of conciliation was doomed to failure, while a statesman of such a temper and of such opinions remained at the helm. In the House of Commons the position of Fitzgibbon, though always considerable, had been a secondary one. He had been overshadowed by the superior eloquence of Flood and Grattan, and among the other speakers there appear to have been several who were considered not inferior to him in ability, and who had greater weight both with the House and with the country. In the House of Lords, however, and in the Privy Council, he appears to have attained an influence which was little less than despotic. He was by far the ablest Irishman who had adopted, without restriction, the doctrine that the Irish Legislature must be maintained in a condition of permanent and unvarying subjection to the English Executive, and in order to secure that end, there was no measure, either of force or of corruption, from which he would recoil. He was thoroughly trusted by the Lord-Lieutenant, and he was the favourite spokesman of powerful family interests connected with the Government, and especially of the Beresfords, who had gradually acquired so many posts of emolument and influence that they exercised an authority almost rivalling that of Lord Shannon in the former generation. The position of Fitzgibbon

was therefore a very strong one. If he continued to be Chancellor, though violently disapproving on a capital question of the policy of the Government, this seemed less anomalous in Ireland than in England, and even in England Camden had lately given an example, though a less flagrant one, of the same kind.

The extraordinary arrogance and violence which he habitually displayed was noticed by almost everyone who drew his character—even by the Archbishop who in a strain of the highest eulogy preached his funeral sermon. In speaking of his Catholic countrymen, his tone was utterly unlike that of Flood, Charlemont, and Foster, who were equally opposed to Catholic emancipation, and it was peculiarly ungracious in the son of one of the 'convert' or conforming lawyers. The elder Fitzgibbon had been an able and successful man. He was related to Edmund Burke, who has spoken with much respect of his 'firm and manly character;'[1] but who looked with dismay and disgust upon the career of his more eminent son. 'I confess I tremble for the conduct of the Chancellor,' he wrote to Grattan, 'who seems, for a long time past, desirous of putting himself at the head of whatever discontents may arise from concessions to the Catholics, when things are on the very edge of a precipice or, indeed, between two precipices; he appears resolved that they shall be tumbled headlong down one of them.'[2] 'A papist,' it was very happily remarked, 'can reason as well as a Protestant, and he can argue with infallible conclusion that if he is, of necessity, dangerous to a Protestant Government, a Protestant Government can by no possibility be salutary to him.'[3] Grattan never appears to have estimated Fitzgibbon very highly, and he considered Foster the ablest opponent of the Catholics, but he clearly recognised the dangerous tendency of the speech I have quoted, in 'diminishing the reconciliatory effect' of the Relief Bill, and 'informing the Catholics that though the Irish law ceased to be their enemy, the Irish Minister continued to be so.'[4] The justice of this criticism is self-evident, but Westmorland, whose own opinions approximated greatly to those of Fitzgibbon, looked upon him with unabated con-

[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 436.
[2] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 114.
[3] Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 73.
[4] Ibid. 126.

fidence, and wrote of him in terms of the warmest eulogy to England.[1]

The Relief Bill, with all its drawbacks, was a measure of the very highest importance, and it was impossible to mistake the satisfaction which it gave in the country. Just before it had passed its first stage in the committee, Hobart wrote to England that the prospect was already brightening. 'The declarations of the Catholics which we receive from all quarters of their gratitude to Government for the Bill now in its progress had so far operated as to raise bank stock 10 per cent. in the course of last week.'[2] The North was, however, still full of sedition, and before the Catholic Bill had passed, the great French War had begun. An Alien Bill guarding against the danger of foreign emissaries, a severe Bill preventing the importation, removal, or possession of arms or ammunition without licence, an augmentation of the military establishment from 15,000 to 20,000 men, and a Bill directing the enrolment for the space of four years of a militia force of 16,000 men, raised, according to the English model, by conscription, passed speedily, and with little discussion.[3] The movement for forming volunteer corps modelled after those of France, and pervaded by a strong republican spirit, was successfully met. The proclamation against the National Guard in Dublin was extended to all volunteer meetings in Dublin, and afterwards in other parts of the kingdom, and the nightly drills, the collection of arms, the adoption of seditious emblems, which for a time seriously disquieted the Government, gradually ceased. The success of these measures Westmorland attributed largely to the cordial support of Parliament and the unanimity with which all parties in it reprobated 'levelling and French principles.'[4] From the Militia Act great things were expected. 'I look upon the militia,' wrote the Chief Secretary, 'as the most useful measure both to England and Ireland that ever has been adopted, and if I am not ex-

[1] 'I cannot do full justice to his conduct during the present session. Thinking what was proposed injurious to the English connection in the first instance, he acquiesced in the wishes of the Government, discountenanced the innumerable cabals that were at work, encouraged the timorous, and to his spirit and decision may in great degree be attributed the successful stand we have made.' Westmorland to Nepean, March 21, 1793.

[2] Hobart to Nepean, March 13, 1793.

[3] 33 George III. c. 1, 2, 16, 22.

[4] Westmorland to Dundas, March 29, 1793.

tremely mistaken, it will operate effectually to the suppression of volunteering, to the civilisation of the people, and to the extinction of the means which the agitators of the country have repeatedly availed themselves of to disturb the peace. . . . I am happy to add that there is every appearance of the restoration of peace in Ireland.'[1]

The Catholic Relief Bill received the royal assent in April 1793, and in the same month the Catholic Convention dissolved itself. Before doing so it passed a resolution recommending the Catholics 'to co-operate in all loyal and constitutional means' to obtain parliamentary reform. It at the same time voted 2,000*l.* for a statue of the King, 1,500*l.* and a gold medal to Wolfe Tone, 500*l.* to Simon Butler for his 'Digest of the Popery Laws,' and a plate of the value of 100 guineas to each of the five gentlemen who had gone to England to present the Catholic petition to the King.[2] The Catholic prelates in their pastorals expressed their gratitude for the Relief Bill. The United Irishmen on their side issued a proclamation warmly congratulating the Catholics on the measure for their relief, but also urging in passionate strains that parliamentary reform was the first of needs.[3] It was noticed at this time, that a large proportion of the borough owners were now convinced that a serious reform in Parliament was indispensable, and were quite ready to concur in it. It was admitted by the most advanced reformers, that nomination boroughs must be treated as private property, and that compensation money should be granted to the patrons,[4] but subject to this compensation it seems probable that with Government support a Reform Bill might have been carried without much difficulty. At first the language of the Chief Secretary on the subject showed some apprehension, but he soon found that no considerable popular

[1] Hobart to Nepean, March 19, 1793.

[2] Compare a memorandum sent from Ireland by the Government, April 25, 1793; McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 59; Wolfe Tone, i. 252–267.

[3] June 7, 1783.

[4] Thus the United Irishmen, in advocating their Reform Bill in 1793, wrote: 'We believe it will be said that our plan, however just, is impracticable in the present state of the country. If any part of that impracticability should be supposed to result from the interested resistance of borough proprietors, although we never will consent to compromise the public right, yet we for our parts might not hesitate to purchase the public peace by an adequate compensation.' Madden's *United Irishman*, i. 238.

movement for reform was for the present to be feared. The Catholic Bill had satisfied many and alarmed some, and the revolutionary movement in the North made one class of mind recoil from all change as dangerous, and another class of mind despise all moderate and legal change as inadequate. Addresses in favour of reform came in from the City of Dublin, and from some of the northern counties, but the Catholics notwithstanding the resolution of their Convention were quiescent, and the constitutional movement in the North had perceptibly abated.[1] Ponsonby, Conolly, and Grattan, introduced the question into the House of Commons, but the Government carried without difficulty an evasive amendment asserting 'that under the present system of representation the privileges of the people, the trade, and the prosperity of the country have greatly increased, and that if any plan be produced likely to increase these advantages and not hazard what we already possess, it ought to be taken into the most serious consideration.'[2]

The prosperity, however, to which the Government so skilfully appealed was now for a time very seriously impaired. Continental troubles, internal disquietude, and acute commercial depression in England, had contributed to check it, at the very time when a great additional expenditure was required for the war. Up to the spring of 1792 the Chancellor of the Exchequer pronounced the wealth of the country to have been steadily increasing, but after this date trade began to languish, and the revenue rapidly declined. In a single half-year it was said to have fallen by no less than 87,000*l.* The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that 750,000*l.* must be speedily added to the ordinary income, and much more was certain to follow.[3] The suffering among large classes of workmen was very great, and political agitators were manifestly trading on it. The warehouses were overstocked with cotton goods which could not be sent abroad, and failures rapidly multiplied. The streets were filled with workmen who could not find employment. The worsted weavers of Dublin stated in a petition to Parliament, that in two months the value of woollen yarn had fallen twenty per cent., and that of the 2,000 looms which in 1789 were

[1] See Plowden, ii. 431–433; Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 308–310.

[2] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 161.

[3] Ibid. 84, 418–420, 421, 433.

employed in Dublin and its neighbourhood, there were not now 500.[1] The distress was so great that an Act was passed authorising the Bank of Ireland to advance 200,000*l.* for the support of commercial credit.[2]

The Government had for some time perceived that in order to combat successfully the levelling spirit, and avoid a measure of reform which might seriously diminish the power of the Crown, it was necessary to acquire some 'popular basis' by accepting the chief measures of the Whig Club, and the necessity for retrenchment strengthened their conviction.[3] A series of measures were accordingly now carried on the proposal of the Government which went far to meet the demands of the more moderate reformers. In the first place, the pension list was to be gradually reduced to 80,000*l.* a year, which was not hereafter to be exceeded, and no single pension amounting to more than 1,200*l.* a year was to be granted except to members of the Royal Family, or on an address of either House of Parliament. It was computed that in this manner a saving amounting to 30,000*l.* a year would be ultimately effected. The King at the same time surrendered his ancient power over the hereditary revenue, and a fixed civil list, which was not to exceed 145,000*l.*, exclusive of the pension list, was granted to him. It was part of the arrangement that an Irish board of treasury was to be created, wholly responsible to the Irish Parliament, and this necessarily involved some considerable expense, especially as two vice-treasurers living in England had to be compensated for the loss of their offices; but it was hoped that the enormous expense of the collection of the Irish revenue would be materially reduced, and by the abolition of the old hereditary revenue the finances of the country were for the first time brought completely under the control of Parliament.[4] This measure was very important, as assimilating the Irish Constitution to that of England, though the great growth of the national expenditure and the heavy burdens which Parliament had contrived from time to time to throw upon the hereditary revenue, had long since put

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 449.

[2] 33 Geo. III. c. 52.

[3] Westmorland to Dundas, Jan. 16; Hobart to Nepean, Jan. 16, 1793. See, too, a powerful letter written by Conolly to his connection, the Duke of Richmond, and intended for the perusal of the English Cabinet, March 23, 1793.

[4] 33 Geo. III. c. 34; *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 431, 447, 448.

an end to the fear that the King, by means of that revenue, might be able permanently to dispense with a Parliament in Ireland.[1]

In addition to this great measure, the Government accepted with little modification the Bill which Forbes had repeatedly brought forward, for incapacitating most pensioners and some placemen from sitting in Parliament. No person who held any place of profit created after the passing of this Act, or who enjoyed a pension for years or during pleasure, might sit in the House of Commons. Several existing functionaries were excluded; members of Parliament, who accepted places of profit already in existence, were obliged to vacate their seats as in England, though they might be re-elected; the number of commissioners for the execution of offices was limited, and every member of Parliament, before taking his seat, was obliged to swear that he did not hold, either directly or indirectly, any pension or office which incapacitated him from sitting.[2]

In this manner some of the great ends of the reforming party in Parliament were attained, and the experiment, whether the House of Commons could be seriously improved, and the democratic spirit in the country to any considerable degree satisfied, by secondary measures of reform, which left the overwhelming preponderance of nomination boroughs untouched, might be fairly tried. It must, however, be observed that one portion of this Act had effects which were certainly not anticipated by those independent members who had originally advocated it. In a Parliament which depended mainly on popular election, a law obliging members who accepted offices under the Crown to vacate their seats, and appeal to their constituents for

[1] The Secretary of State (H. Hutchinson) said: 'The nett hereditary revenue for the last year ending March 25, 1792, was 275,102*l.*, and the gross amount 764,627*l.*, which was reduced to so small a sum by charging the whole expense of the collection and management of the whole revenue on this part of it; but when this came to be considered no man could justify it. It arose at first from laying the additional duties on those subjects of taxation from which the hereditary revenue arose. It afterwards became a pious fraud to lay every possible charge on this fund, and with that view bounties and premiums to a very great annual amount were charged on it, which had reduced its amount.' *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 473. Some very valuable speeches on the history of the Irish Revenue were delivered in this discussion.

[2] 33 Geo. III. c. 41. According to the *Anthologia Hibernica* (ii. 237) eleven pensioners and five placemen in the existing House of Commons, were for the future excluded by the Act.

re-election, was manifestly a guarantee of public liberty; but in a Parliament consisting mainly of nomination boroughs at the complete disposal of the Ministers, its effects were very different. It gave the Government facilities for vacating seats, replacing members, and changing the composition of the House without a dissolution, which added materially to their power. No distinction was drawn between real offices and mere nominal offices, like the Chiltern Hundreds in England, and there were four such offices in Ireland, with salaries of thirty shillings attached to them. In 1789, when Forbes first brought forward a measure substantially the same as the Act of 1793, Buckingham clearly perceived the advantages he might derive from it, and although it limited the pension list to 80,000*l.* a year, he argued that it would still be probably for the advantage of the Government to accept it.[1] The Bill was accordingly in that year suffered to pass the Commons, but after some hesitation the Government resolved to throw it out in the Lords, on the ground that 'the violent and dangerous combination existing against Government [after the Regency contest] could only be ultimately destroyed by a considerable increase to the charge in the civil pension list,' and that there was at that time 'very little hoped of uniting to a systematic support those whose seats depend on popular elections.'[2] Its enactment, however, in 1793, though it in some slight degree purified the House of Commons and held out a prospect of considerable future improvement, was no real sacrifice of Government influence, and the power it gave the Ministers of changing the borough members without appealing

[1] He writes: 'A principle is established by this Bill entirely novel in the Statute-book, though often attempted by different Governments: I mean the principle of vacating, by pension or otherwise, the seats of members of the House of Commons. I need not explain to your lordship the manifest advantage of such a power to be lodged in the Crown. It is well known that his Majesty's service has often suffered materially from the want of it, and the Opposition have always been particularly jealous on this subject; and I am inclined to believe that they would not have passed this clause had they clearly seen the operation of it.' 'The King's Government will be essentially strengthened by it.' Even the portion of the Bill limiting the civil pension list to 80,000*l.* a year (exclusive of pensions granted to the royal family or on parliamentary address) did not appear to Buckingham altogether objectionable, as it gave for the first time a full parliamentary recognition to the right of the Crown to grant, without any parliamentary control, pensions to that amount. Buckingham to Sydney (secret), Mar. 20, 1789.

[2] Ibid. (most secret) March 20, 1789.

to the popular constituencies by a dissolution, enabled them, thirteen years afterwards, to carry the legislative union.[1]

It was evident indeed that, unless the borough system in Ireland was reformed, no great change in the character of the House could be expected. That system the Ministry determined carefully to maintain, but the Catholic Relief Bill operated to some extent as a measure of reform in the county constituencies. It was estimated by a contemporary that about thirty thousand new electors were at once created. Many smaller landlords, whose tenants were chiefly or exclusively Catholic, obtained a considerable accession of political power, and several counties, where the whole representation had been practically in the hands of two or three great families, were in this manner thrown open.[2]

Several other measures of great importance were carried in this remarkable session. A favourite object, for which Grattan had long laboured, was attained by the passing of the Barren Land Act, which encouraged the cultivation of the great tracts of barren land that still existed in Ireland, by exempting them for a period of seven years from the burden of tithes.[3] An Act, corresponding to Fox's Libel Act, provided that juries in libel cases might, in Ireland as in England, give their verdict upon the whole matter at issue, instead of being confined to the questions of publication and of meaning.[4] The hearth tax was rearranged, and while the taxes on the larger houses were increased, a suggestion which had been made by Grattan and Conolly, and which received the special approbation of Pitt,[5] was carried into effect, and all cottages which had only one hearth, and tenancies of a not greater value than five pounds a year, were wholly exempted.[6] The right of Ireland to participate in the East India trade was also now fully acknowledged, but the Irish Parliament agreed to recognise the monopoly of the East India Company, and when the charter of that Company was renewed for twenty years, provisions were made which substantially, though with some

[1] See the very just remarks of Barrington, *Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation*, c. xxii.

[2] McKenna's *Political Essays relative to the Affairs of Ireland*, 1791–1793, pp. xiii, 200–203 [1794].

[3] 33 Geo. III. c. 25.

[4] Ibid. c. 43.

[5] Westmorland to Dundas, Jan. 16, 1793.

[6] 33 Geo. III. c. 14.

restrictions, removed the grievance of exclusion, of which Irish statesmen had hitherto complained. The East India Company undertook that a ship of 800 tons burden should sail annually from Cork to India for the purpose of carrying Irish goods.[1]

Grattan was very anxious at this time to go still further, and to place the whole commercial relations between England and Ireland on a basis of perfect reciprocity. This, as we have seen, had been the policy of Pitt in 1785, and Grattan again declared his full approval of that policy considered as a commercial arrangement, though he still justified his opposition to Orde's propositions as amended in England, on the ground that they contained provisions which were inconsistent with the constitutional independence of the Irish Parliament. It was extremely important, from a political as well as a commercial point of view, that a war of hostile tariffs, which does so much to sunder friendly nations and to generate political animosities, should not arise. In the North there was still some clamour for protecting duties against England, and there were several instances in which Irish goods were not admitted into Great Britain on the same terms as English goods into Ireland. England still maintained her woollen monopoly by imposing a prohibitory duty of 2*l.* 0*s.* 6*d.* per yard on one class of woollen goods imported from Ireland, and of 6*s.* per yard on another class, while the corresponding duties imposed on these goods when imported from England into Ireland were only 5½*d.* and 1½*d.* per yard. Irish printed linens were subject in England to an import duty of sixty-five per cent., while the corresponding duty in Ireland was only ten per cent. Cotton goods paid an import duty in England of thirty per cent., in Ireland of only ten per cent.[2] Grattan contended that it was very important for both countries that all these inequalities should be abolished, and that the commercial arrangements between the two countries should be definitely and finally fixed. The Irish Government rejected his proposal, on the ground of the lateness of the session and of the inexpediency of combining so large a question with the question of the East India trade; but it appears from their confidential correspondence that they considered it eminently wise, and that they would have had no

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 451, 452, 488-514; 33 Geo. III. c. 31.
[2] *Parl. Deb.* xiv. 50.

difficulty in carrying it in Ireland. Hobart, after describing the success of the East India Bill, wrote to England, 'The conduct of the Irish Parliament upon this business, I hope, will prove to you that I was not much mistaken when I urged the expediency of treating Ireland with liberality, and for once conferring a favour without letting it appear to have been extorted. Mr. Pitt's plan for settling the commercial intercourse between the two countries is now, I believe, in all the most difficult points nearly accomplished. It would be a singular satisfaction to my mind, to be instrumental in effecting the remainder. . . . What remains is little more than to place Great Britain and Ireland on the same footing as Great Britain and France. Mr. Pitt is certainly apprised of the difficulties he would have to encounter in England. We should have very few here. The principal objections would be likely to arise from the friends to protecting duties. Mr. Grattan, having stirred the question, must be answerable for that part of the unpopularity which might attend it, and we should have the credit and the popularity which might generally belong to the measure. . . . I am satisfied it is more practicable now than at any former period, and if the opportunity is lost it may fail for ever.'[1]

One other important measure carried in the session of 1793 remains to be noticed. The well-known Convention Act was levelled against the habit which had for some years prevailed in Ireland, of summoning great delegated or representative assemblies outside Parliament, which assumed to represent the people or some large section of them, and to speak in their name and with their authority. The Catholic Convention had been dissolved, but the United Irishmen proposed to convoke a national assembly at Athlone. All such assemblies were by the new Act pronounced unlawful, though the full right of subjects to petition for redress of grievances was acknowledged. The Bill took its rise in the House of Lords, where it was introduced by the Chancellor. In the Commons it was resisted by Grattan, who, however, spoke, in the opinion of the Government, in the 'most moderate manner,' and frankly admitted that such a convention as that proposed to be held at Athlone was, in the present state of Ireland, very dangerous and ought to be withstood. His

[1] Hobart to Nepean, July 17, 1793.

objections to the Bill were that it extended beyond the necessity of the case, that it was a declaratory Bill and that the declaration of law which it contained was erroneous, and that it threw a retrospective censure on the Catholic Convention, the Volunteer Convention of Dungannon, and some other perfectly legal assemblies. The Bill, however, was carried by large majorities, and it was only repealed in our own day.[1]

The session of 1793 extended to the middle of August, and was one of the longest as well as one of the most important ever known in Ireland. Whatever divisions there may have been on the great questions of internal policy, the Government at least could complain of no slackness or division in the support of Imperial policy, and the French party, which undoubtedly existed in the country, found no countenance or representative among the leaders of the Opposition.

Only a single discordant note on foreign politics was this session heard in Parliament, and it proceeded from a young man of thirty who had no political weight or ability, though the charm of his character and the deep tragedy of his early death have given him an enduring place in the hearts of his countrymen. Lord Edward Fitzgerald, the younger brother of the Duke of Leinster, had, through the influence of his brother, been elected for the county of Kildare during his absence, and contrary to his wish, in 1790. His life had hitherto been purely military. When a very young man, he had served with distinction at the close of the American War, under Lord Rawdon, and was afterwards for some time quartered in British America. His artless and touching correspondence with his mother has been preserved, and it enables us to trace very clearly the outlines of his character. Warm-hearted, tender, pure-minded, and social to an unusual degree, he endeared himself to a wide circle, and his keen devotion to his profession gave promise of a distinguished military career, but he was not a man of serious or well-reasoned convictions, and he had all the temperament of a sentimentalist and an enthusiast. To such men the new lights which had arisen in France were as fatally attractive as the candle to the moth. Already in Canada the philosophy of

[1] 33 Geo. III. c. 29; *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 540–556; Hobart to Nepean, July 21, 26, 1793.

Rousseau had obtained an empire over his mind, and on his return to Europe he plunged wildly into revolutionary politics. In the autumn of 1792 he was staying at Paris with Paine, and he took part in a banquet to celebrate the victory of the Republic over the invaders, at which toasts were drunk to the universal triumph of the principles of the Revolution and the abolition of all hereditary titles and feudal distinctions. Such a proceeding on the part of an English officer could hardly be passed over, and Lord Edward was summarily dismissed from the army. In Parliament he appears to have been a silent member till an address to the Lord-Lieutenant was moved, thanking him for having suppressed the National Guard which had been enrolled in imitation of the French, and pledging the House to concur in all measures that were necessary for the suppression of sedition and disaffection. Fitzgerald starting from his seat vehemently expressed his disapprobation of the address, and pronounced the Lord-Lieutenant and the majority of the House the worst subjects the King had. The House was cleared, and a scene of confusion followed which has not been reported. Lord Edward's explanation of his words was of such a nature that it was unanimously voted by the House 'unsatisfactory and insufficient.' On the following day some kind of apology was at last extorted, but it was so imperfect that a large minority voted against receiving it.[1] The incident would be hardly worth recording but for the subsequent career of Lord Edward, and it is also remarkable because he alone in the Irish Parliament represented sentiments which were spreading widely through the country.

Burke in his 'Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe,' which was published in 1792, has expressed his deliberate opinion that notwithstanding the grave difficulties of the time, the Irish Revolution of 1782 had hitherto produced no inconvenience either to England or Ireland; and he attributed this fact to the admirable temper with which it had in both kingdoms been conducted. The real meaning of the Irish Parliament of the eighteenth century was that the government of the country was essentially in the hands of its Protestant landlords, qualified by the fact that the Executive possessed a sufficient

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 82, 83; Moore's *Life of Lord E. Fitzgerald.*

number of nomination boroughs to exercise a constant controlling influence over their proceedings. It was a type of government that grew out of political ideas and out of a condition of society that have irrevocably passed, and these pages will furnish abundant evidence of the many forms of corruption and abuse that attended it. The belief, however, that the owners of landed property are the natural rulers of a country, the class by whom its government is likely to be most safely, most efficiently, and most justly carried on, was in the eighteenth century scarcely less prevalent in England than in Ireland, and even in America it was countenanced by no less acute and independent a writer than Franklin.[1] Nor can it, I think, be reasonably disputed that the Irish Parliament in the latter years of the century, though it had great defects, had also conspicuous merits. Though animated by a strong national spirit, it was thoroughly loyal to the English connection, prepared to make great sacrifices in defence of the Empire, and extremely anxious to work in harmony with the Legislature in England. With two exceptions, of which the importance has been enormously exaggerated, it had hitherto done so. The prosperity of the country had undoubtedly increased under its rule. It contained many men who would have done honour to any Legislature. Its more important debates exhibited a singularly high level of knowledge and ability. Its later legislation, and especially the system of taxation it established, will certainly not appear illiberal, intolerant, or oppressive, when compared with the contemporary legislation of Europe; and the session of 1793 abundantly shows that it was ready, with the assent of the Government, to carry great measures of reform.

It is a remarkable, but an incontestable fact, that at the opening of the great French War there was far more unanimity in supporting the Government against the foreign enemy in the Parliament at Dublin than in the Parliament in London. But outside the Protestant Parliament the state of feeling was very different, and the condition of the country was very alarming. Romilly had noticed in the previous year the immense impression which Paine's 'Rights of Man' was making in Ireland, and he had predicted that Ireland was the country in which the

[1] See vol. iii. 378.

deadly contagion of the French Revolution was likely to be most powerfully and most speedily felt.[1] This prediction was now coming true. The party of Wolfe Tone, Butler, Bond, Hamilton Rowan, Emmet, and McNevin, looked upon the French Revolution as the dawn of the brightest promise that had ever shone upon Europe, and when they found their country committed to war with the cause to which they were so passionately attached, their bitterness knew no bounds. Their discontent was all the greater because Grattan entirely refused to follow the example of Fox in denouncing the war, supported cordially every military measure which was deemed necessary, and only gave a very partial and qualified opposition to the proclamation against the volunteers, the Gunpowder Bill, and the Convention Bill, which were intended to check the dangers from disaffection at home. The name of Grattan was still so great, his eloquence was so transcendent, his character was so transparently pure, that few open murmurs against him were heard; but from the Opposition as a body the United Irishmen were wholly separated. Wolfe Tone wrote that he had 'long entertained a more sincere contempt for what is called the Opposition than for the common prostitutes of the Treasury Bench, who want at least the vein of hypocrisy.' Emmet, who was perhaps the ablest member of the party, declared that 'The United Irishmen and their adherents thought that Opposition had forfeited all pretence to public confidence' by consenting to the measures for the repression of disaffection, 'at least before any advance had been made to correct the acknowledged radical vice in the representation.'[2] Paine was elected an honorary member of the United Irishmen. Some of its leaders were already in correspondence with prominent French Revolutionists. They were closely connected with democratic societies in England and Scotland. Simon Butler and Rowan met the delegates of the Scotch democratic societies at Edinburgh, and they reported on their return that Scotland was quite as ripe for an active democratic movement as Ulster itself. The popularity of republican sentiments at Belfast was shown by the signs representing Mirabeau, Dumouriez, Franklin, and Washington, which hung in the streets, and in March a fierce riot

[1] Romilly's *Life*, i. 427. [2] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 45.

was occasioned by a party of dragoons who attempted to cut them down.[1]

In June the annual synod of Ulster met. It was a body consisting of the Presbyterian ministers of the North and the presbytery of Dublin, together with a lay delegate from each parish. Such a body might reasonably be regarded as the most faithful representative of the sentiments of the Presbyterians of Ireland, and the meeting was especially interesting, as the Government had very lately augmented the Regium Donum to the Presbyterian ministers in hopes of influencing and attaching them. The synod drew up a very loyal address, but it was a significant fact that it took the occasion to express its dislike to the war, and also its satisfaction at the admission of the Catholics to the privileges of the Constitution.[2]

Indignation at the war was at this time the dominant sentiment of the Belfast party. Addresses were circulated describing it as a war for the persecution of principles, and calling on the people to meet to petition for peace, and to inform the King that their real sentiments were not reflected by the proceedings of the Parliament. 'What is the navigation of the Scheldt to us?' they asked in one of their addresses. 'Why should we interfere because France, like Cromwell, has killed a guilty king? Let the rich who want war pay for it. The people are starving. Trade in all its branches is paralysed. Yet Ireland has no cause of quarrel with France.' The proclamation suppressing the volunteers produced some considerable disturbances, and the balloting for the militia many others. In almost every county it was violently resisted, until the Government wisely resolved to abandon or mitigate the system. Voluntary recruits were largely enlisted. Substitutes were permitted for those who were balloted for. Country gentlemen subscribed bounties in order to induce volunteers to come forward, and some provision was made for the families of militiamen. By these means the ranks were speedily filled, but in spite of all the efforts to suppress them, riots and conspiracies were multiplying. The Government letters in the spring and summer of 1793 are full of accounts of secret drillings; of attempts to form national

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 138; McNevin, pp. 54, 58.

[2] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 60.

guards in different towns of Ulster; of the concealment of guns, ammunition, and even cannon; of midnight parties attacking country houses and seizing arms; of the untiring industry with which the levelling principles of the Revolution were propagated. The riots of the Peep-o'-Day-Boys and Defenders rose and fell, but they had infected many counties, and secret combinations were spreading among the lowest class, to resist the payment of tithes and hearth money, and sometimes of priests' dues, and of rent. Westmorland and Hobart wrote that an oath 'to be true to the Catholic cause' was widely taken; that rude proclamations were circulated declaring that the people 'must have land at ten shillings per acre, and will have no farmers nor great men, and that they are fifty to one gentleman;' that equality not only of religion, but of property, was expected; that large numbers of pikes were manufactured, and that there were constant rumours of an impending insurrection.

It is possible, and indeed probable, that the letters from the Castle were somewhat overcoloured. Neither Westmorland nor Hobart were able men; their letters show some traces of panic, and they were surrounded by men who had long been endeavouring to alarm the English Ministry in order to check the reforming designs of Pitt and Dundas. There can, however, be no reasonable doubt that their information was substantially correct, and that the condition of the country had in a few months greatly deteriorated. 'The pains which have for these last eighteen months been taken,' writes Hobart, 'to persuade the people of the irresistible force of numbers, has given them such an idea of their strength that until they are actually beaten into a different opinion they will never be quiet. . . . Amongst other considerations, relief from tithes, rents, and taxes, forms no small part of the inducements held out to them; and they are taught to expect the assistance of the French, who, they are told, will participate with them all the blessings of freedom and equality. Whether we are to expect a rebellion to break out in any corner of the kingdom I am very much at a loss to conjecture.' 'The Jacobins are not more inimical to Great Britain than the United Irishmen to the peace of this country; indeed, I am satisfied that they are connected with the worst men in

France.'[1] Although the Irish Parliament had voted military forces, including the militia, of not less than 36,000 men, the Lord-Lieutenant for a time doubted whether any more troops could be safely sent out of Ireland. 'The danger,' he said, 'to which the lives as well as property of the gentlemen of this country are exposed is a feeling that cannot be resisted. In truth, the people of property and lower order here are as distinct sects as the Gentoos and Mahommedans. The lower order or old Irish consider themselves as plundered and kept out of their property by the English settlers, and on every occasion are ready for riot and revenge.'[2]

Before the close of the session of Parliament the aspect of affairs appears to have somewhat improved. In August, Hobart announced that the country had quieted greatly, and he added his hope 'that the military aid we are to give you will have the benefit of considerably assisting you in the operations of the campaign, without hazarding the peace of Ireland.'[3]

The elements of anarchy and sedition, however, were manifestly multiplying, and from many different quarters dark clouds were gathering on the horizon. The French Revolution, and the rapidly growing political agitation which had arisen, had profoundly altered the conditions of Irish politics, and a great war had immensely added both to their difficulty and to their danger. I propose to devote the last volume of this work to a history of the closing years of the Irish Parliament; of the great rebellion which it encountered; and of the Act of Union by which it was finally destroyed.

[1] Hobart to Hamilton, June 17; to Nepean, July 21, 1793.
[2] Westmorland to Dundas, May 24, 1793.
[3] Hobart to Nepean, Aug. 17, 1793.

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